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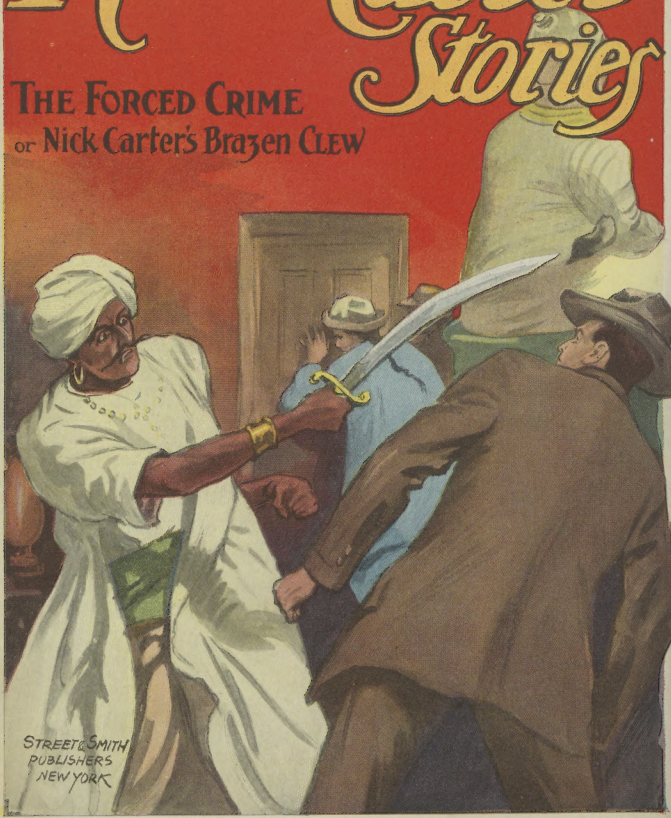
Nick Carter Stories

THE FORCED CRIME
or Nick Carter's Brazen Clew



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NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE FORCED CRIME;

Or, NICK CARTER'S BRAZEN CLEW.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A TALE OF BURGLARS.

"You say this burglar has got into your bedroom three times?"

"Yes, Carter. Three times that I know of. He may have got in oftener for aught I know."

"Hardly likely, Mr. Bentham. If you woke up three times and saw him, it indicates that there is something in his presence which affects you even in your sleep. It is a psychological influence, evidently."

Professor Matthew Bentham, one of the most learned scientists in Brooklyn, shook his head. He knew too much about psychology to believe it was an agent in his case.

"That explanation won't do, Carter," he declared. "On each occasion I have been awakened by a distinct noise in the room."

"But you never got up to interfere with the man," Nick Carter reminded him. "That isn't your way. No one ever has insinuated that you lack in physical courage. You are an athlete, too. I have had the gloves on with you, remember, and I know how you handle yourself. There must have been something to make you lie still in bed while a stranger was ransacking your bedchamber."

The famous detective was sitting comfortably in Professor Bentham's well-appointed library on the ground floor of the latter's home near Prospect Park, and both were smoking.

Carter had dropped in casually to see his friend, and the subject of the mysterious burglar had come up without any previous knowledge of it by the detective. They had been talking about other things, particularly about some important records of a Chinese secret organization which were in Matthew Bentham's care, and which were soon to be sent to Washington.

Suddenly, Bentham had confided to Carter that he was worried over certain midnight visits that had been forced upon him, and instantly the great criminologist was deeply interested.

"Did your burglar—or burglars—get away with anything?" he asked.

"There is only one of him. At least, I think so. I never have had a clear view of his face. He is a slim, active sort of man, dressed in an ordinary dark business suit, with a soft hat pulled down over his eyes. The hat has always prevented my seeing as much of his features as I should like."

"There are many thousands of slim, active men, in dark business suits and soft hats, moving about Greater New York," remarked Nick, between puffs at his cigar.

"True," conceded Bentham. "But you know, as well as anybody, that every human being has certain peculiarities of movement, attitude, and poise, that are not exactly the same as those of anybody else. There is a sort of what I may call 'atmosphere' about each one of us—an aura—that distinguishes us from all our fellows. You know that, Carter?"

The detective nodded.

"Yes, professor. That is pretty well understood by most persons, I think. Well, we'll say it is only one particular burglar who favors you with his company in this way. What I asked is whether he steals anything."

"He never has yet. But I think that is because I never leave valuables lying about the room. I never carry much cash in my pockets—have no use for it unless I am going away somewhere—and my watch is always under my pillow."

"And why have you never got up to argue matters with him?"

"Because I can't. He seems to hypnotize me."

"Then there *is* a psychological influence?" smiled Nick.

"To that extent, yes. But I do not believe it is that that awakens me."

Nick Carter took his cigar from his mouth, and, with a careless gesture, knocked off the ash into a silver tray on the table.

"Well, that is of not much consequence, after all," he said. "What is the fellow after? He must have some purpose in coming three separate times, only a night or two apart. You say you don't know how he gets in?"

"Haven't an idea. The doors and windows are all locked at night before we retire, and we find them the same way in the morning."

"What servants have you?"

"Only two maids, besides the boy who does odd jobs, such as polishing brasswork, sweeping the front steps, and waiting on the cook. He sleeps out of the house. My daughter lets him in early in the morning. There is an electric contrivance, operating from her bedroom, which opens the side gate, and also connects with the lock of the back door to the kitchen."

Nick Carter stopped smoking and looked hard at the professor. He was interested in this mechanical device.

"I should like to see that electric connection," he said. "Can you show it to me?"

"Certainly. Wait a moment."

Bentham went out of the room. When he returned he smiled apologetically.

"My daughter is dressing to go out this afternoon. But I can tell you all about it. There is nothing remarkable about the apparatus. I had it put in by a regular electrician. It is a great deal like the electric door openers used in flat houses, by which tenants open the front door at the street without leaving their apartments."

Nick Carter resumed his cigar and smoked for several minutes in silence. His host could see that he was thinking hard, and did not disturb him. Instead, he kept on gravely smoking himself.

"The last time this fellow came in was last night, eh?" asked Nick Carter, after a long pause.

"Yes."

"And you have not told anybody about these visits?"

"No one. You see, my daughter Clarice and I are alone, except for the two maids. I would not worry Clarice, and there would be no use in telling the maids. They probably would take fright and leave. You know what a bother is to get good servants in New York."

"Those records of the Yellow Tong, sent to you by Andrew Anderton on the night that he died—you have them?"

"Yes."

"Who brought them? As I remember Mr. Anderton's last letter to you, he said they would be sent by safe hands. What did he mean by that?"

"They were sent by express to a club I belong to, but which I seldom visit. Then I got a cipher telegram from the club, informing me that there was a package in the safe there for me. I went to the club and got the package."

"I see. It was a wise precaution on the part of Anderton. He knew that you were likely to be shadowed by some members of the tong, and that if you brought anything direct from his house, in Fifth Avenue, it would be doubtful whether you ever would get it home."

Nick Carter spoke in low tones, as if he were deep in thought, and were letting his tongue run on almost without guidance. At the same time, it need hardly be said that this astute, long-experienced student of criminology was not the man to say anything without knowing exactly what he was saying.

"You have the package quite secure, I suppose?" he asked.

"Quite, I believe. Nobody knows where it is but myself—not even Clarice. It is not that I would not trust my daughter. But there would be nothing gained by her knowing, and it might worry her to think that she held an important secret."

"Women like secrets generally, don't they?" smiled Nick Carter.

"That is the tradition," acknowledged Bentham, also with a smile. "But Clarice is a level-headed girl. Then she has had to take care of me for three years, since her mother died, and that has given her a sense of responsibility, I think, which is beyond her years. She does not know anything about the package, and would not be interested in it, anyhow."

"Don't you see any connection between the visits of this mysterious stranger and the package?" asked Nick slowly. "May it not be that the Yellow Tong—and you know how powerful and far-reaching it is—has set its agents to get from you the records that it is so important to the organization to keep from the government at Washington?"

Bentham smoked a few seconds before replying. The same suspicion had been in his own mind, but he had brushed it away. Now, here was this cool-headed, straight-seeing master detective suggesting the same thing.

"It is possible you are right, Carter," admitted the professor. "I'll take those records to Washington to-morrow night. I can't go before, because I am going to a reception this evening given by the famous Indian savant from the Punjab, Ched Ramar. You have heard of him?"

"Yes. He has been in the newspapers a great deal the last few weeks. Who and what is he?"

"One of the most eminent scholars from that country," answered Bentham enthusiastically. "He has traveled a great deal, especially in Tibet. He has a collection of idols from that country which are well worth seeing, I am told. I am delighted with the prospect of looking them over to-night."

"I should think you would be. Is there a special invitation needed to get into his house this evening?"

"Well, I don't know. I got a card addressed to me. But there is a line on the card to the effect that any friend of mine will be welcome. It is written in pencil. The remainder of the card is lithographed. If you would like to go, I should be pleased to take you in. My daughter is going, with her aunt, Mrs. Morrison. She is Clarice's mother's sister."

"I accept your invitation with pleasure," said Nick Carter. "But—here is a request I have to make. You won't think it very strange, knowing my profession. I should like to go in disguise, and under another name than my own."

"Don't want to be recognized, eh?" smiled Bentham. "Why? You don't think there will be anybody there who would be afraid of you as Nicholas Carter, the detective, do you? Ched Ramar is a man who moves in the highest circles and is known all over India. His house, in Brooklyn Heights, is one that questionable characters would find it hard to enter. He has two tall men

of his own race perpetually on guard at his door—besides many other servants engaged in this country."

"It is merely a fancy of mine, perhaps," returned Nick. "I will be Doctor Hodgson, if you don't mind. Shall I come here to-night?"

"If you will. I'll take you in our car. Mrs. Morrison and Clarice will be with us. Get here about half past eight. We don't want to go too early. It will be ten o'clock or so before things get into full swing at Ched Ramar's house."

"All right! I'll be here at eight-thirty," replied Nick, as he got up to go. "I'll have just about time to go home and dress, and get back again."

"It takes you a long time to dress," laughed Professor Bentham. "I can get ready in half an hour any time."

"My dress will be rather more elaborate than yours, perhaps. I have to change my face, you know."

CHAPTER II.

A HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

When a grave, bearded man, with gold-rimmed spectacles and hair brushed up straight from his forehead, presented himself in Matthew Bentham's library at half past eight, the professor could not see anything in him to suggest the clean-cut, up-to-date American whom he knew as Nicholas Carter.

The big, blond beard and mustache completely changed the contour of his countenance, while the pompadour hair and the lines in the forehead were not those of the detective, although they seemed to be perfectly natural in Doctor Hodgson. The rather shabby cape overcoat which covered his evening clothes was not such a garment as he would wear in his own proper person, either.

It was only when the door of the library was closed, and Nick knew they were alone, that he dropped the deliberate speech he had used, and spoke in his own natural, quick tones.

"The package still all right, professor?" he asked.

"Yes. I looked a few minutes ago, to make sure. Somehow, I hate to leave it in the house when I am away. It is something I never have done before. Still, I am not afraid it will be found—even if my burglar should come while I am away. He may do that, if he is keeping as close a watch on me as I think he must. I have too much faith in my hiding place."

Nothing more was said, for just then Clarice knocked at the library door, and, on her father telling her to come in, she stood before them.

Clarice was a beautiful girl, who looked enough like her father for any one to recognize the relationship. She had something of the intellectual gravity of the professor, and Nick set her down at once as a very bright young woman. He put her age at not more than twenty. Later her father told him she lacked two months of that age.

With Mrs. Morrison—a middle-aged, dignified matron, richly attired and bejeweled—on one side of him, and Clarice on the other, in the tonneau, Nick Carter kept up his character of a learned doctor by talking authoritatively on tuberculosis, typhus, and similar cheerful subjects brought up by Mrs. Morrison, but always with one eye on Clarice. He wanted to hear the girl talk, so that he could judge whether she would be careful in guarding her father's house against strangers.

But Mrs. Morrison—who was a good woman in her way, and devoted much time to the poor and sick of New York—would not let him off. They got to the house of Ched Ramar without Clarice getting an opportunity to throw in more than a few words here and there, and he did not see her again until they were in the handsomely furnished reception rooms of the Indian scholar, and were looking at the curiosities on all sides.

Nick Carter got an opportunity soon to stand back and look steadily at Ched Ramar. He saw a tall man, with the dark skin and black eyes of the East Indian, and wearing the white turban of his race, who talked good English and was the essence of suave courtesy.

"I don't know how it is," thought Nick Carter. "His face seems familiar and yet I know I never saw Ched Ramar before."

As the detective moved about with the others, looking at the many curious idols of various metals that were disposed about the great rooms, and answering readily to his assumed name of Doctor Hodgson, he seemed not to have any interest outside of what he was inspecting with the other guests. But his gaze never left the swarthy face of Ched Ramar for more than a few seconds at a time.

"Where have I seen him before?"

This was the question that would not keep out of Nick Carter's mind. It might have worried him, too, only that he had quite determined that he would answer it before he was many days older.

"Perhaps not to-night," he told himself. "But when I get alone, in my own room, I'll go through my portrait gallery of people I have met, and I'll place him, or know the reason why."

There were other rooms besides these two great double drawing-rooms to which the guests were invited. In all the apartments of the house were some strange things worth seeing, and Ched Ramar took pleasure in offering them to the inspection of those who had honored him by coming.

He said this himself, and he seemed sincere when he did so. He seemed inclined to pay particular attention to Matthew Bentham, Clarice, and Mrs. Morrison. He talked to them more than to any of the other guests, Nick Carter thought.

The two tall Indian guards, in glittering military uniforms, with curved swords at their sides, and gaudy turbans setting off their dark, solemn faces, were always at the wide door of the reception rooms, and the detective noted that they watched every move of the throng as it surged about the apartments.

Ched Ramar had the air of a man who trusted everybody, but his guards' vigilance suggested that he had given them orders to be suspicious unceasingly.

"Hello! Where's he taking that girl?" suddenly exclaimed the detective.

Ched Ramar had directed the general attention to a large glass case filled with magnificently jeweled weapons at one end of the drawing-room. Then he called one of the guards.

"Show and explain these, Keshub," he ordered shortly.

Keshub, the guard, made a deep salaam and marched to the end of the case. He spoke as good English as his chief, and his sonorous tones rolled through the rooms

as he told the history of each dagger, sword, and gun to his open-mouthed listeners.

It was at this instant that Nick Carter made his inaudible remark, for Ched Ramar led the girl behind some heavy red velvet hangings, which dropped back into place, hiding them.

For a few moments Nick stood still, uncertain what to do. He had no idea of allowing this young girl to be taken into a secret part of this big, strange house by a man like this Indian, whom no one knew except as a famous man in his own country.

"I've got to see what is back of those portières," muttered the detective. "I don't see Matthew about, or I'd tell him. By George! This is New York—even if it is Brooklyn—and we don't do things of this kind. He must think he is still in the Punjab."

He saw that Keshub was busy with the people who were admiring the really wonderful display of weapons in the glass cases, and that the other guard was staring at the people over there. No one was taking any notice of himself.

"All the better," he thought.

He edged around the wall till he stood in front of the red velvet curtains. Then he gently pulled them apart and looked behind. What he saw was the gilt railings of a door that evidently belonged to an elevator. The elevator car was above, on another floor.

"One of those automatic affairs," he thought. "Well, all the better. I'm going up. If one of the guests is entitled to ride in the elevator, it ought to be all right for another. Anyhow, I can easily explain that I supposed we were all to go up here, if there is any question."

He pressed an electric button, and the car slid noiselessly down. The coming down of the car released a latch on the railed door, and Nick pulled it open. Taking his place in the car, he pressed a button inside, and was wafted upward.

The elevator was so delicately adjusted that it made not the slightest noise, and it stopped at the next floor above without a jar. There were thick curtains outside, like those below. Also a railed door.

Gently, Nick opened the door and stood inside the curtains, listening. He caught a low murmur of voices, which told him that the speakers were at some distance.

He opened the curtains a little way, and then stepped between them. He was in a dimly lighted room, with a red lantern giving the only illumination. At one end were heavy portières draped back, so that he could look beyond, into another room.

In the farther room he saw that there were idols of all sizes and kinds. He remembered that Ched Ramar's collection of idols was said to be the finest possessed by any private person in New York. Moreover, each idol had a history.

Standing, with their backs to him, were Clarice Bentham and Ched Ramar himself. The latter was pointing to one immense image of Buddha which faced the opening in the curtains. He was talking in a low, earnest tone, and it seemed to Nick as if the girl were completely entranced by the great, golden figure and the words that poured from the grave lips of the Indian.

"I can't hear what he is saying," muttered the detective. "I suppose the way to find out is to step forward and show myself. And yet——"

At this instant the low tones of Ched Ramar changed to loud, clear accents, delivered in a matter-of-fact way, as he waved his hand toward the Buddha.

"That Buddha and other things in this room will interest you for some time, Miss Bentham, I have no doubt," he said. "But I can hardly remain away from my guests. I will leave you alone. When you are ready to come down, you know how to work the elevator. Although it is possible that some of the other ladies below will be up to see the idols before you have finished looking at them."

"Oh, but I don't know whether I dare be left here alone with these dreadful things," she protested, with a shudder. "I'm rather afraid of them."

Ched Ramar laughed good-naturedly as he shook his head at her.

"I beg your pardon for laughing, Miss Bentham," he said. "But, really, I had never thought of my poor idols in that light before. These things that so many thousands of people in Asia believe can save them from all ill, and bring succor to them in distress—surely ought not to frighten any one, even an American young lady. But, if you are timid, why, I'll take you down at once."

This offer seemed to bring Clarice to herself. She was ashamed of her apprehensions, and Nick saw her shoulders stiffen as she declared, in a resolute voice:

"No, I'll stay till I've looked at all of them. I hope you won't think I'm a coward. When I said I was afraid I meant that I felt a sort of awe. I should think most persons would experience some such feeling on beholding all these strange figures for the first time. No doubt, if I lived in Tibet, or wherever these images come from, I should regard them only with reverence, and believe in them as sacred guardians, like the others who have been familiar with them from childhood."

Nick Carter slipped behind a tall vase on a stand close to where he had been standing. He saw that Ched Ramar was about to go downstairs, and he did not want to be seen.

"I'll stay up here till she has finished her examination," he thought. "Then, if she should get frightened—as she may when she is alone—I'll step forward and try to give her courage. She knows me only as Doctor Hodgson, and I flatter myself I took the part of a grave and reverend medico pretty nearly to perfection."

Ched Ramar, with a low bow, turned away from the girl, strode to the red velvet curtains, and pulled open the railed door. That was the last Nick saw of him, for the curtains fell together before he had stepped into the elevator.

Clarice, her two delicate, white-gloved hands interlocked behind her, stood gazing thoughtfully at the gigantic Buddha.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE BUDDHA SAID.

The Buddha was a work that would have attracted special attention in any collection. If it had been in a public museum, there is no doubt there would have been a crowd in front of it most of the time.

It was on a dais of its own, a giant statue of a squatting Buddha, wrought in hammered brass, with an enormous sapphire in the middle of its great forehead. The sapphire alone must have been worth an immense sum, just as a jewel.

The figure reached almost from floor to ceiling, so that the sapphire was very high. If one wished to look at the jewel at close range—and most persons who entered this room did want to do so—he had to climb a small stepladder which stood conveniently at one side. Nick saw the girl looking at this ladder, and he was about to make his presence known so that he could move it for her, when she carried it over herself to the front of the image and placed it firmly for use.

"No timidity about that girl," thought the detective. "Ched Ramar needn't get that idea into his head."

Unlike most statues of Buddha, the eyes of this one were not closed. They were merely skillfully made openings, which, in the gloom of the room, might easily be imagined to have cruel, shifty eyes in their depths.

"I must go up and look at that sapphire," the girl said aloud. "I never saw such a magnificent jewel in my life before. I have heard that they have precious stones in India that are never equaled anywhere else, and I can believe that now. What a heavenly blue! Yet I wish those eyes weren't there. Pshaw! They are only holes! I believe I am a coward, after all."

This thought seemed to put courage into her, for she had her foot on the bottom step of the ladder even as she spoke. She did not go up at once, however. Standing at the bottom of the ladder, with one foot on the step, she looked up at the face of the idol in a reverie that was half fascination and half repulsion.

"I've got to go up and look at that sapphire!" she breathed at last. "Besides, I want to look at its face close. I feel as if I must."

With her hands out to steady herself, so that they touched the knees of the great figure, she went slowly upward, hesitating at each step. She could not have told why she went up so slowly and uncertainly. It seemed as if there were a power greater than her own controlling her movements.

It seemed to Nick as if the blue light of the sapphire changed to a horrible green as the girl drew her face level with the great brass visage of the statue.

"Pshaw!" he murmured. "It was only the shadow of her head. But in such a place as this one might imagine anything."

Up a little higher she went, and, as one hand hung rigidly at her side, the other rested on the shoulder of the god. It was an incongruous picture they made—the beautiful young American girl seemingly exchanging confidences with this grotesque representation of a deity coming down through countless ages.

Suddenly a hollow voice seemed to fill the room. It came from the sneering, parted lips of the image. There could be no doubt of that. The detective involuntarily tried to get a little nearer, to catch what the words were.

Clarice was gazing intently into the eye sockets of the idol. She saw—what was not visible to Carter where he stood—two staring eyes that were *alive!*

"You will obey—obey—obey!"

The voice sounded like the distant murmur of rushing waters. It was rather that of some strange, unearthly being than of anything human.

"I will obey," replied the girl, in a dull monotone.

To Nick it sounded as if she were talking in her sleep, but she never relaxed her hold on the brazen shoudler, and she stood perfectly upright on the stepladder.

"It is well," went on the mysterious voice. "You know what to do. Follow the instructions that will come to you later."

"How am I to know?" she gasped.

"Listen! Bring your face close to my lips. What I have to tell is for you alone."

Nick Carter thought he heard her utter a low cry of terror and protest. But immediately afterward she pressed her beautiful, warm cheek against the brazen mouth of the image, and Nick saw in her eyes that she was not cognizant of anything save the message that had already begun to come to her.

The detective made an impulsive step forward. Should he dash up the steps, drag the girl away, and see for himself what this strange scene meant?

He knew that the whole contrivance was some fiendish trick. But who had arranged it, and why, was beyond him. Ched Ramar was a man of high standing in the scientific world—even though he had not been long known in New York. It was inconceivable that he could have any evil purpose in all this. And yet—what was it all about?

If it was an experiment of some kind, to prove a scientific or psychic theory, then certainly this East Indian must not be allowed to work it out with the aid of this innocent young girl. Still, it was not for him, Nick Carter, to interfere, until he knew. All he could do was to watch, and be ready to give help if it should be needed. He kept still and waited.

For two or three minutes the girl stood there, while a low murmur reached Nick's ears, telling him that the image—or somebody inside it—was talking to Clarice Bentham.

At last she moved back, and again came the distinct words: "You will obey!"

"I will obey," she replied.

"It is well. Before you leave this house, a small gold image of myself will be placed in your hands. Each afternoon, at six o'clock, you will look into its eyes. As you do so, you will be subject to my will. It will be my eyes you will see there."

"Bunk!" muttered Nick Carter.

"If I have any orders for you," continued the voice, "you will hear my suggestions, for at that very moment I shall be sending mental messages. If I have none for you, you will put the image away—until the next afternoon. You understand?"

"Yes."

"That is all. You will forget all about this—that you have looked into my eyes and heard my voice. You will not remember how long you have been standing up here, and you will not recall anything when the small image is given to you. Now! Awake!"

Clarice's right hand passed over her eyes, and she stared at the idol curiously. Then she looked around, and Nick Carter saw that her gaze was normal. She seemed to be quite her usual self. He stepped forward and spoke to her.

"Taking a close view of that statue, Miss Bentham?"

"Yes, Doctor Hodgson! It is a wonderful piece of work, isn't it? And no one can tell how old it is. That sapphire in its forehead attracted me, and I felt as if I must look at it from the ladder. You have to allow for feminine curiosity, you know," she laughed.

"Masculine curiosity would impel me to go up there,"

returned Nick, with a smile. "Indeed, it was curiosity of that kind that brought me into this room just this moment. I found the elevator, and I was bold enough to make use of it. I am glad I was, for I should not like to have missed this room. Ched Ramar has a wonderful house."

Nick made this remark about only just having come up because he did not know who might be listening. If a man could get inside that statue and pretend the statue itself was speaking, it was quite possible that he was now hiding somewhere else within hearing.

The girl came down the steps, and Carter had placed his foot on the bottom one, intending to go up, to look into the cavernous depths of the eye sockets himself, when the curtains in front of the elevator parted, and Ched Ramar came into the room. He brought with him Matthew Bentham and Mrs. Morrison.

The latter ran forward as she saw Clarice. Then she stopped abruptly, as her gaze fell upon the immense brass statue.

"Mercy! What an awful-looking thing! It's an idol, isn't it? I was wondering where you'd gone, Clarice. So was your father. How did you find your way up here alone?"

"She did not come alone," broke in Ched Ramar, smiling gravely. "I led her up here. Then I left her for a moment to bring you and Mr. Bentham. I was going to ask Doctor Hodgson, too, but he anticipated me, I see," he added, with a bow to Nick Carter.

"I have just come up," responded Nick. "This Buddha is worth seeing, and I'm glad I found my way here."

"Yes," was Ched Ramar's reply. "This is an extremely ancient image of the god. It was captured during a Tartar raid many centuries ago. It is reputed to possess marvelous occult powers. I would not dare to deny that that is untrue. The sapphire in its forehead is, I believe, one of the finest specimens in existence."

"Aren't you afraid the sapphire may be stolen?" asked Mrs. Morrison, fascinated by the blazing beauty of the jewel. "I should think a thief would risk a great deal to get it."

Ched Ramar smiled significantly.

"Any thief who thinks he can get it, is welcome to try," he said, with quiet confidence. "This Buddha is able to take care of itself and of everything it possesses. You remember what I said just now—that it is supposed to be endowed with strange powers. But let me show you something else. I am rather proud of this room. It contains the finest specimens in my collection of antiques."

He went to a table in a distant corner, and came back, carrying a very small gold idol in his long fingers. The image was exquisitely wrought, and so much soul had the artist put into his work that, from certain angles, the diminutive god seemed actually to be alive.

"What a beautiful thing!" ejaculated Clarice, as she bent nearer to the idol. "And what wonderful eyes!"

There were eyes in the sockets, and they seemed to goggle and stare as one looked into the gold face. Everybody examined the image separately, as it was passed from hand to hand, but it was only Nick Carter who noted that the colored iris of each eye was an exact duplicate, in tone and shape, of those belonging to the grave East Indian student who called himself Ched Ramar.

Clarice, more than any of the others, seemed to be taken with the beauty of the golden idol. She stood, holding it in her hands and gazing in silent admiration, as if she were fascinated.

"Miss Bentham seems to like my poor specimen. Will she honor me by accepting it?"

"Why, I—I—don't think I should," she protested, making as if she would put it down. "It is too valuable. It would be too much. I really couldn't take such a priceless——"

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Morrison, turning from some other images she had been looking at on a table near her. "What did you say, Clarice?"

"Professor Ched Ramar has asked me to accept this exquisite gold idol, aunt. I couldn't—could I?"

"No, I think not, dear," returned Mrs. Morrison. "It is such a wonderful and costly thing, that——"

"It pains me that you decline," murmured Ched Ramar. "If I have offended, I am sorry—deeply sorry. But my excuse must be that it is a custom of my country to offer trifling gifts like this to ladies who seem to admire them. You understand, I hope?"

Mrs. Morrison looked from the tall, dark Indian to her niece, and seemed to make up her mind with a jerk.

"Yes, I think I understand," she answered. "Of course, if it is the Indian custom, that makes a difference." Then, turning to Clarice, she went on: "I think you may accept it, Clarice. And, I may add, that it is an opportunity which does not often come to a girl."

Ched Ramar put the idol in Clarice's hands, and she held it before her with an expression of rapturous delight in her fair face.

"How can I thank you?" she murmured.

"Oh, it is nothing," declared Ched Ramar, putting up his hands with a protesting gesture. "Let us go down again. There are some pieces of jade—vases—that I don't think I have shown you, and that I should feel honored if you and Mrs. Morrison would take with you as mementos of this evening."

When, half an hour later, the party left the house, the two ladies had the magnificently carved jade vases to which Ched Ramar had referred. But Clarice held clasped to her bosom, as if she feared she might lose it, the gold idol that seemed to have been merely an uncontemplated gift, but which Nick Carter remembered had been promised to her by the strange voice from the lips of the gigantic Buddha.

"I wonder just how far thought transference and hypnotism really can go?" he said, as he entered his library and lighted a cigar, an hour or so afterward.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EARLY-MORNING CALL.

It was a custom of Nick Carter to take a brisk walk by himself in the early morning when he had been able to get to bed at a reasonable hour the night before. In accordance with this habit he was out of the house and on his way to Madison Square before seven the day after his visit, with the Benthams and Mrs. Morrison, to the home of Ched Ramar, in Brooklyn.

The grass looked and smelled fresh at that hour, for it was a bright morning, and there had been a light shower of rain during the night, which had freshened the verdure and flowers, and brought out their fragrance more than

usual. The detective enjoyed a stroll about the little park, and his thoughts were clearer than they would have been in a room. At least, he believed they were.

"Hypnotism!" he mused, half aloud. "That is the explanation, no doubt. But it doesn't make everything clear. For instance, it doesn't tell me who this Ched Ramar really is. I looked at him closely last night, and I couldn't see anything in him that warranted my doubting him. Nevertheless, I *do* doubt him—from the top of his turban to the heels of his slippers."

He took another turn up the path he had chosen for his stroll, in a rather retired part of the square, before he resumed his half-audible cogitations. Then he went on slowly:

"It is fortunate for society that the understanding of hypnotism rests chiefly in the hands of men who are to be trusted. Were its power to be wielded to any great extent by criminals, there would be many innocent tools of lawbreakers. It may be that Clarice Bentham is one of them. I hope not, but it looks suspicious.

"The greatest tragedy is that, while under the dominion of another's will, the hypnotic subject has no realization of its doings, and, when consciousness returns, no remembrance. Well, if Ched Ramar is taking advantage of that young girl's innocence of the ways of the world to make her do things she would shrink from under ordinary circumstances, I don't think it will be well for Ched Ramar. In fact—— Hello! What's the trouble now? Here comes Chick!"

Indeed, Chick came hurrying along the path at a pace that told he had something important to communicate—even if his face had not shown that he was excited.

"Telephone, chief!" cried Chick, as soon as he came within hearing. "It is Professor Matthew Bentham. Wanted to know if you could see him if he came. I told him you were out just then, but I believed I could find you."

"Yes?"

"I also said that I had no doubt you would see him, and that he'd better come over from Brooklyn—that's where he lives—and get to our house by the time you were there."

"That was right. Did he say he would come?"

"Yes. He said he would come over in his motor car and be there in a few minutes."

So well had Matthew Bentham timed himself that his car drew up in front of the Madison Avenue house just as Nick Carter and Chick walked up from Madison Square. The three entered the house together, while the chauffeur kept the car at the curb, to wait.

"It's gone!" were Matthew Bentham's first words, as soon as they were in the library. "I've just found it out."

"You mean the package of papers sent by Andrew Anderton?"

"Yes. There are not many things would have made me trouble you at this time of the morning, so you can easily guess. I was tired when I got home last night, after that reception at Ched Ramar's, or I would have looked then to see that the records were safe. But I went to the place where I had put them the first thing this morning, even before breakfast."

"In a secret place?"

"Yes. The one I told you about yesterday afternoon."

"Did you say nobody knew where they were but yourself? Think hard, please. You are quite sure you have never let it out to your daughter, for instance?"

"I told you yesterday that I have been careful to keep it from her—for her own sake. She has not the slightest idea where I kept those papers."

"What is the name of the boy who does odd jobs about your house—and sleeps away?" asked Nick, with seeming irrelevance.

"Swagara."

"Curious name. What countryman is he?"

"Japanese."

Nick Carter started and looked hard at the professor. Then he smiled grimly, as he asked:

"Where did the boy come from? How did you get him?"

"An employment agency in New York. He had been a valet for a theatrical man before he came to me. But he didn't like traveling, and he was willing to do the menial work I require rather than go on the road again. He wanted to stay in New York, so that he could study more conveniently. He is a bright chap, and he speaks German and French, as well as English and his own native tongue."

"He brought good references, I suppose?"

"Unimpeachable," was Bentham's prompt reply. "He has been in this country three years, and there are many persons in Brooklyn who knew him before he went with the theatrical man, Goddard. They all speak well of Swagara. He attended a college there, studying languages, and everybody says he was marvelously quick."

"I don't doubt it," was Nick Carter's dry response. "However, please tell me all the facts of this case. Then we will see what we can do."

"There is nothing to tell, except that the records sent to me by my friend Andrew Anderton, just before his death, have been stolen from my home since yesterday afternoon, when I last looked at them. The theft may have been committed while we were at Ched Ramar's, or afterward, when we were asleep."

"Who was in the house while you were at Ched Ramar's? This Japanese of yours, Swagara?"

"No. Only the two maids—the cook and the general servant. They would never touch anything. We've had them a long time. Besides, I've seen them proof against all kinds of accidental temptations. They could have robbed me hundreds of times if they had been criminally disposed. You may as well cut them out of the list of possible thieves, Carter."

"I have cut them out," replied Nick.

"And Swagara, too?"

"Not yet. I should like to know a little more about Swagara. You are sure he was not in the house while you were away?"

"Quite."

"How do you know?"

"He has proved an alibi—without trying to do so. He mentioned that he was visiting a fellow countryman of his who is employed at Yonkers, and that he did not get home till two o'clock this morning. This friend of his is in the service of a friend of mine, and I had him on the telephone just before I came out this afternoon. Swagara did not leave the house in Yonkers till one o'clock. He and his chum sat in the kitchen, talking till that hour. My friend happened to have company, and

he did not go to bed till Swagara left. So he knows. I was home by one."

"That settles that, then," agreed Nick. "We must look elsewhere. By the way, have you ever heard exactly how Andrew Anderton died?"

"No. I was told that he died of heart failure. But from what I have heard about Sang Tu and the Yellow Tong, and of its hatred for Anderton, I am inclined to think that hideous Chinese organization was somehow responsible for his death."

"It was responsible," declared the detective. "Wait a moment. I want to show you something."

He went to his iron safe, and, twisting the combination knob for a few seconds, opened the great door. Then, after using a key he carried on his key ring to open one drawer within another, he brought out a small tin box and placed it on the table.

"Don't touch what I am about to show you, Mr. Bentham," he warned. "It is dangerous."

When he opened the box, he held it close to his visitor. Inside were two long, glittering needles, crossed and held together at the point of contact.

"Harmless-looking things, aren't they?" asked Nick. "Yet it was these that killed Andrew Anderton. Well, not these exactly, but two needles of the same kind. They are poisoned, so that even a slight scratch with one of the points will cause instant unconsciousness, followed by death in a few seconds."

"Who did it?"

"That has never been found out. Two men concerned in the murder have paid the penalty. But the one at the back of it all is still at large. We shall get him, but we haven't done it yet. I only mentioned this to convince you that the power which put Andrew Anderton out of the world is not likely to hesitate at breaking into your house and stealing the records that were the cause of his assassination."

"The crossed needles," murmured Bentham musingly. "I have heard of them. But I did not really believe they were in use in New York. They are a cheerful feature of certain phases of life in China, I understand. I heard a guest of mine talking about them the other night. He was a Chinese professor from Peking, introduced by a member of the Oriental Association."

"What was his name?" asked Nick casually.

"Upon my word, I forget. Something like Ning Po, though I don't think that was it exactly."

"Not Sang Tu?"

"No, indeed," replied Bentham, with a slight smile, as he shook his head. "You don't suppose I should receive the head of the Yellow Tong in my house without knowing who he was? This Professor Ning Po—or whatever his name was—did not look the kind of man to be connected with such an infamous organization. He was a very mild sort of man, blinking behind large spectacles, and a decidedly entertaining personage."

"I should like to have seen him."

"I think you would have found him worth while. He has made himself famous by his translations of ancient Chinese literature into English. I hope to see him again. I enjoyed his conversation very much."

"Was Professor Ning Po, by any chance, alone in the room in which you have these records hidden, at any time, during that evening?" asked Nick, with one of those sudden changes of topic that he often indulged in when working on a puzzling case. "I don't ask which room that was."

"It was the library," replied Bentham. "I was about to tell you that. In fact, I should like to show you the secret place where I kept the package of papers, if you can spare time to come with me."

"I shall spare the time, of course. I could not give you much help, I am afraid, unless I had your entire confidence. That means that I want to see the receptacle from which the thieves took the papers. You have not breakfasted, I think you said?"

"No, I was too anxious. I just hurried right out, to see you, without thinking about breakfast."

"Nevertheless, it is not well to work seriously without proper meals. Will you honor me by taking breakfast here?"

"Thank you, I will," answered Matthew Bentham. "Now that I have confided the case to your hands, I am not so worried, and my appetite seems to be returning."

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLLOW TABLE LEG.

When Matthew Bentham's motor car left Nick Carter's house, it held, besides Bentham, the chauffeur, and Nick, the latter's assistant, Chick.

The detective had explained that he often found Chick's quick observation of inestimable benefit, and Bentham had been only too willing for him to accompany them.

"I confess the whole thing is such a puzzle to me that I cannot see how even you are to get to the bottom of it," he remarked, as the car swept over the Manhattan Bridge. "Perhaps Mr. Chick will see into the problem. At all events, the more there are working on it, the better chance there seems to be of success."

Once in the library in Matthew Bentham's house, with the door locked, and only Bentham, Carter, and Chick in the room, the detective proceeded to make a close examination of the window. There was only one window, and it overlooked a garden at the back of the house.

Access to this garden could be obtained from the street through a narrow passageway at the side of the house, which was guarded by a high wooden gate, with a row of spikes on top. The gate had a spring lock, which could be opened from without only by a key.

"The window has an electric burglar alarm, Carter," observed Bentham, as Nick began to look it over. "There was no indication that it had been tampered with when I examined it this morning. The catch was properly secured, too. I can't think the thief got in that way."

Nick Carter did not reply. Instead, he called to Chick, and throwing open the window, went through and dropped to the garden beneath.

"Come down here, Chick, and look around," he directed.

The ground below the window had been newly sown with seed, and as yet was only sparsely covered with grass. Mr. Bentham intended to have a small patch of lawn there eventually. So soft was the soil that the footprints of sparrows who had been digging up the grass seed were plainly revealed.

"No footprints, so far as I can see, chief," remarked Chick. "If any one had been here, his heels would sink in a couple of inches."

"That's true, Chick. I agree with you. But I guess we'll make sure no one has been in the garden. Look

all over it on that side, and I'll do the same on the other."

In about ten minutes both of them were in the library again, with the window closed.

"Now will you show me the place in which you hid the papers?" asked Nick Carter, in a businesslike way. "But, if you don't wish my assistant to know, he will step outside the room."

"I don't wish him to do so," interrupted Bentham. "Why should I? This is a confidential affair, and certainly Mr. Chick is in my confidence when I know he has proved himself worthy of yours."

He pulled down the window shade, and added to his precaution by closing a solid, wooden shutter inside. Then he hung a velvet jacket he generally wore in the library on the handle of the door, so that it covered the keyhole.

"I am not afraid of anybody eavesdropping," he explained. "But I do not want you to feel that it is possible. We are quite sure nobody can peek in here now."

He pulled out the drawer of his massive, mahogany library table and laid it on a chair. Then he thrust his hand into the opening and pressed in a certain spot. His next move was to replace the drawer, following this by clasping with fingers the thick, round leg on his right as he sat at the table.

It seemed to take considerable strength to accomplish his purpose, and it was several seconds before he slid the front of the leg around, disclosing an opening in it some ten inches long and three wide. This part of the table leg was hollow.

"There is the place, Carter. You see that it is empty."

"Has anything about the table been forced?" asked the detective. "Or was the table leg opened in the same way that you did it just now, by pressing certain buttons and unscrewing part of the leg?"

"Nothing has been injured, so far as I can see," returned Bentham. "Let me show you just how it works."

He took out the table drawer again, and Nick Carter, flash light in hand, peered under the table. It did not take him a moment to understand the ingenious contrivance.

"You see, what adds to the security of this table-leg cupboard, is that the drawer must not only be taken out, but also put back, before the opening can be made," said Bentham. "It is not the kind of thing that could be discovered accidentally."

"That is apparent," agreed Nick. "Whoever stole those papers knew just how to get at them. Would you mind asking Miss Bentham to come into the library for a few moments?"

"I will do so if you wish it," was the reply. "But Clarice cannot help us. She did not know anything about the papers being gone till I told her, and she had no idea even then of their great importance."

He rang the bell as he spoke, and in a minute a fresh-looking maid came in and looked inquiringly at Matthew Bentham.

Nick Carter decided that it would be hard to suspect this maid of being mixed up in the affair. Obviously, she was the sort of girl who would attend to her work conscientiously, and think of nothing else after it was done except her personal affairs—new clothes, and so forth.

"Mary, ask Miss Clarice to step here," requested Bentham.

Almost directly, Clarice Bentham came into the room, followed by her aunt, Mrs. Morrison.

"I took the liberty of coming with Clarice, Matthew," explained Mrs. Morrison. "I have not gone home yet, and I am very anxious to know whether you have found out anything about your papers."

Nick Carter bowed to Mrs. Morrison and Clarice. They returned his bow with smiles, for both of them knew that the famous detective, Nick Carter, was in the house. Neither had the slightest idea that this keen-faced man, with the brisk manner, was the rather slow-spoken Doctor Hodgson whom they had seen last night. It was not the detective's intention that they should know it, either.

"I am sorry to trouble you, Miss Bentham," he began. "But it occurred to me that it might be worth while hearing what Professor Ched Ramar said to you last night when you were examining the big statue of Buddha in his famous idol room. Everybody has heard of that wonderful image. Your father tells me you examined it closely."

"I did," she admitted readily. "Professor Ched Ramar showed it to me himself. He only told me that it was considered a fine specimen. Then he went away. When I was alone, I climbed up to look at the face of the idol, and Doctor Hodgson, who came into the room, spoke to me about it in a general way. Professor Ched Ramar also came in, with my aunt, Mrs. Morrison, and my father. Ched Ramar afterward gave me a small gold idol."

"Yes? Was Doctor Hodgson there at the time?"

"I believe so. But I am quite sure Doctor Hodgson had nothing to do with the loss of these papers, any more than Ched Ramar had. You don't think my visit last night had any connection with the burglary, do you?" she added, with a quizzical smile.

He passed over this query, as if it were too absurd to be taken seriously, and turned the conversation by hoping that the ladies were not fatigued by their examination of Ched Ramar's antiques the night before.

"That sort of thing always tires me excessively," he explained. "I am afraid I ought not to have come to you so early in the morning afterward."

"This is not early, Mr. Carter," protested Clarice, still smiling. "I am ashamed to be so late. We have only just finished breakfast. By the way, here is the gold idol that was given to me. I was looking at it just now when Mary told me I was wanted in the library, and I forgot to put it down."

She passed the idol to Nick Carter, and he stared at it intently for a few seconds, as he tried to understand why the eyes looked so human, although he knew they were only of skillfully fashioned glass.

"I will not detain Miss Bentham any longer," he said to Bentham. "It was hardly worth while to trouble her at all. But I thought possibly she might have heard something that would put us on the right track."

"You surely don't suspect Professor Ched Ramar of stealing papa's papers, do you, Mr. Carter?" she asked, laughing. "I hope you'll pardon me if I say that you seem to look suspiciously at everybody. That is the way it strikes me now. But I know it is the only way to find out things, and I do hope you will find papa's valuable papers. I hate to see him so worried."

With a playful wave of the hand to Nick Carter, as if she were asking his pardon again for speaking so bluntly,

the girl went out of the room, followed by her rather stately aunt, and Chick whistled softly to himself.

"She's a mighty pretty girl," he muttered. "But she's rather too fresh in the way she talks to the chief. He never suspects anybody without very good reason."

CHAPTER VI.

BROKEN THREADS.

For five minutes after Clarice and Mrs. Morrison had left the library, Nick Carter sat in front of the table in a brown study. He felt as if he had run against a brick wall, and that it would take some climbing to get over it.

"Chick," he said, at last, "suppose you go down into the kitchen regions and interview the Japanese young man you'll find down there. His name is Swagara. Find out if he has any Chinese friends, and whether he knows Ched Ramar. Don't be rough with him. Lead him on gently. Understand?"

"Yes. That's clear enough," replied Chick.

"You are wasting your time with Swagara, I'm sure," put in Bentham. "I'll answer for him."

"It is from apparently unlikely sources that valuable information often is obtained," answered Nick Carter quietly. "Oh, and by the way, Chick."

He walked over to the door, where Chick already had his hand on the knob, and spoke quietly to him for a few moments. Then Chick nodded comprehendingly and went out.

"While Chick is talking to Swagara, will you have the cook and Mary up here? I should like to question them in the presence of each other. No," continued Nick, with a smile, as he saw a peculiar expression in Matthew Bentham's face, "it isn't that I want them to contradict each other, and so prove that they are not telling the truth. In their nervousness they are likely to tell different stories. My object is to get at the exact truth by letting one remind the other of details she may have forgotten. I believe both those young women are honest."

The cook was a woman of thirty-five or so, while Mary was ten years younger. When they came into the library, Nick Carter politely gave them chairs side by side. Then he took a seat at the table and looked them over judicially.

"I am sorry to say," he opened, "that Mr. Bentham has lost something of value, and he has permitted me to ask you a few questions. Of course, not a shadow of suspicion attaches to anybody in the house, but we have asked everybody to help. Miss Bentham and Mrs. Morrison have just told me all they know—which is nothing at all. It may be the same with you, but you won't mind my asking you a few things, I am sure."

This diplomatic way of putting it disarmed the two young women at once. The cook, in particular, would have fiercely resented the slightest intimation that she could touch anything which was not her own, and Mary would not have been far behind.

"We shall be glad to tell anything that will help," replied the cook, who answered to the name of Maggie, and whose surname was Quinn. "But I do not think either me or Mary can be of much help. What was it you were wanting to know, sir?"

"Will you both cast your minds back to last night? Begin at ten o'clock, after Mr. Bentham, Miss Clarice, and Mrs. Morrison had gone out, and think carefully. Did anything whatsoever happen which was at all out of the ordinary? Remember that what may seem of no moment to you may be of importance to us. Please go over every moment."

"I can't think of anything out of the ordinary," replied the cook. "I went around, with Mary, to see that all the doors and windows were fastened. Then we went to bed."

"That's so," confirmed Mary. "We both went to bed."

"And slept soundly all night?"

"Yes," replied Mary. "Except——" she stopped.

"Yes?" prompted Nick. "Except what?"

"Well, we generally get up at seven o'clock. But something woke me at six this morning, and I looked out of our window, which is in the front of the house, on the top floor."

"What did you see?"

"Nothing much, except Miss Clarice walking away from the front door, and going fast down the avenue, to where the street cars pass. It wasn't anything remarkable, except that she doesn't often go out so early as that."

"I never knowed her to do it before," put in the cook. "Especially after being out so late the night before," added Mary.

"You'd think she'd be tired," remarked Maggie.

"Too tired to get up before six in the morning," supplemented Mary.

"Where did she go when she went down the avenue?" asked Nick. "Did you see whether she got on a car?"

"I didn't see, sir," was Mary's reply. "But it would have been easy to do, if she wanted to."

"Look here, Carter!" interrupted Bentham impatiently. "This is sheer waste of time. What if my daughter did take an early-morning walk? There is nothing remarkable in that. She is a healthy young girl, with a love of nature. When can you enjoy nature better than in the beginning of a fine day? But it has nothing to do with this loss of my papers. How could it have any bearing on such a matter?"

"Still, I should like to know," insisted Nick. "This is all I want to ask of these two young women, but I should like a few more words with Miss Bentham. Perhaps Mary will tell her so when she goes out?"

Mary looked inquiringly at her employer. He nodded savagely, and Mary and Maggie left the room.

When Clarice came in, a few moments later, she appeared to be slightly surprised, but she took the chair her father pointed to without remark.

"Mr. Carter desires to ask you one or two more questions, my dear," blurted out her father angrily. "I don't see the necessity, but perhaps I shall understand later."

His accent and manner said, plainly enough, that he did not expect to be convinced, but he meant to give Nick Carter all the opportunity he sought.

"I shall be only too pleased to tell you anything I can, Mr. Carter," she said. "But I feel as if I have given you all the information I have—which is simply nothing at all."

"We can't always tell at the beginning," returned Nick. "I will not take up much time, but there are one or two things I wanted to discuss with you, if you don't mind. You went for a walk this morning earlier than is your custom, I believe?"

"Yes. But why do you ask?"

She smiled as she put this query, in the manner of one

who feels something like pity for a puerile question. The detective was not disturbed, however. He continued his questioning in an even tone:

"Did you go for any special purpose, or merely for the benefit of the exercise?"

She pondered for a few moments, as if this was something that had not occurred to her. A slightly troubled look clouded her pretty face.

"I really cannot say exactly, Mr. Carter. But I think it was only because the beautiful morning tempted me. I went to bed late last night—or, rather, this morning. But it is often the case with me that, when I retire much later than my usual time, I am awake several hours earlier in the morning. When I wake, I always want to get up."

"H'm!" muttered Nick Carter. "There is reason in that. I am often the same way." Then, in a more brisk tone: "Do you mind telling me where you went?"

"I don't mind at all. I went down this avenue till I got to where the trolley cars pass. It had been my intention to go into the park for ten minutes or so. But I thought it would be pleasanter to ride in one of the open cars for a few blocks, and come back in the same manner. So I stepped on a car."

"A Brooklyn Heights car?"

"Yes. It was going in that direction."

"Do you remember where you got off the car, and what you did then?"

The girl shook her head, with a smile, and held out her two hands protestingly.

"Actually, Mr. Carter, I cannot tell. I must have been so absorbed in my own thoughts that I didn't notice how far the car went, or where I left it. All I know is that I found myself at home again after a while, and that I got off the car that brought me here at the corner, two blocks down our avenue. I had been thinking about various things the whole time, and I had performed my whole journey mechanically. It is not often I do that, but it has happened before, and if you had not asked me about it, I should not have given it any further thought."

The sincerity of the girl was beyond question, and Nick Carter knew he could not expect to find out anything more from her. His manner was easy and courteous, as he told her he was sorry to have troubled her, and begged her not to think any more about him or his questions, either.

"I don't mind the questions at all," she declared. "If I could have told you anything that would be of assistance to my father, I should have been only too glad."

"I am sure of that," Nick assured her warmly.

When Clarice had gone out of the library, with a graceful bow and smile for the detective, Matthew Bentham heaved a sigh of relief.

"I knew Clarice could not tell you anything that would have a bearing on this case. I hope you will not consider it necessary to ask her anything more. She is of a nervous temperament, and I am always careful not to do or say anything to distress her when it can be avoided."

"Naturally," said Nick. "But, as you saw, the few innocent questions I put did not agitate her. As for the case as a whole, I confess it is very baffling. I shall have to go home and think it over."

"You think you will be able to recover the papers eventually, do you not? I suppose that is a foolish question, but I am so anxious that I cannot help saying what completely fills my mind."

"I shall not rest until I have satisfied myself on several points that have a direct bearing on the mystery. I am in hopes that when I have done that, I shall have a report for you that will be valuable. I cannot say any more than that at this stage. I will call you up as soon as I have something to communicate. Meanwhile, I should advise you not to walk about the streets or go into public places much."

"I never do, for that matter," replied Bentham. "You think some of the Yellow Tong might get after me personally then, do you?"

"Have you a gun?"

"Yes. I got a permit to keep one in the house and to carry it, some time ago, when these burglaries began. Look!"

He showed a serviceable-looking automatic pistol in the table drawer, in a chamois bag. Nick saw that it was well supplied with cartridges and ready for instant use.

"That's well," said the detective. "If any of the tong should find their way to you and ask insolent questions, or if you should see any suspicious movements on the part of any burglar, I should advise that you shoot first and ask questions afterward."

Before Matthew Bentham could comment on this emphatic advice, Chick came into the room and showed, in a way that Nick Carter understood—although it meant nothing to Bentham—that he had something weighty to communicate.

The detective arose and nodded carelessly to Chick.

"Ready to go, eh, Chick? I was just saying 'good morning' to Mr. Bentham."

"Did you find anything from Swagara?" asked Bentham, in a tone that told plainly enough how surprised he would have been if the answer had been in the affirmative.

"Swagara hadn't anything to say of any consequence," replied Chick, as he and Nick Carter left the room and the house.

CHAPTER VII.

PATSY GETS INTO THE GAME.

"What did you find out from the Jap, Chick?" were the detective's first words, as soon as they were well away from the front of Bentham's home.

"Nothing. What I told Mr. Bentham just now was the absolute truth. But I learned something from the cook, Maggie. Swagara had to go out to get some vegetables for her, and while he was away, Maggie loosened up."

"Go on! Hurry up!" urged Nick. "What did she say?"

"Only that Swagara used to be employed by Ched Ramar, the Indian millionaire. That is how Maggie describes him. She knew it through another cook—a cousin or sister of hers, I believe—who lives in the next house to Ched Ramar. She's seen Swagara go into the house, at night, and I guess he's been holding two jobs—one here and the other at Ched Ramar's."

"Is he employed there still?"

"I couldn't find that out. Maggie seems to be afraid to say much about Ched. All she has been told is that he is a millionaire, and she has that only on the strength of the jewelry he wears when he goes out, and the fact

that swell people visit him. He has not lived at that house very long. When he moved in, about six weeks ago, all the things he brought with him were truckloads of big packing cases. Some of these were as big as a house, according to Maggie's cousin—or sister. When all those were in, furniture came from some big store. It was all new, and Maggie's relative thinks it is only rented."

Nick Carter had been listening so closely to Chick's recital that they were at the subway station they intended to go to before they knew it. He told Chick to save the rest till they were in a train. When the train started with them, Chick resumed:

"Maggie says Swagara is a quiet young man, who doesn't talk much. But she has never cared for him since she found he was sneaking away to work somewhere else at night, when he ought to be resting, so as to be ready for what he had to do at Mr. Bentham's house the next day."

"What time does he leave Bentham's usually?" asked Nick.

"About half past eight. He gets there at nine in the morning, ready to begin work after breakfast."

"Where does he live?"

"He has a room in a street off Fulton, down near Borough Hall, Maggie says. That's all she knows about it. Of course, I had to get all this out of her by degrees, and under the seal of confidence. I tried to make a good impression on Maggie," continued Chick, with a grin, "and I flatter myself she thinks I'm all right. I told her I was your clerk, and that I sometimes acted as a chauffeur."

"Good!" commended Nick. "Half past eight, you say, Swagara leaves Mr. Bentham's house at night?"

"Yes."

"I want you to bring Swagara to our house when he leaves Bentham's to-night, Chick. Have him in my library by nine, if you can."

Chick did not express any astonishment at this order. Neither did he seem to have any doubt that he could fill it. He had been told to do strange and difficult things so many times that there was nothing could surprise him now.

"All right, chief," was all he said. "I'll work it through Maggie."

Nick Carter did not reply. He did not care how his instructions were carried out, so long as he was obeyed.

When, after luncheon—which he took at his home, with Chick and Patsy Garvan, his other confidential assistant, for table companions—Chick said he was going out and would not be back till nine at night, most likely, the detective only nodded. He knew that Chick was going after Swagara.

For some little time after the departure of Chick, the famous detective busied himself in looking over his mail, which he had not had time to attend to before, and Patsy Garvan helped him.

"Say, chief," broke out Patsy, after working industriously for an hour sorting letters and putting them in their respective piles under Nick Carter's eye, "can't you let me in on this Yellow Tong case again? I was in it before, you know. Didn't I make good then?"

"You certainly did, Patsy. I have no fault to find."

"That's what I thought. But, gee! You and Chick are having a lot of things doing with this Mr. Bentham, and I'm out of it. Of course, I ain't kicking, because you know what you want. But—gee!—I'd like to get into it. Ain't there anything I can do?"

Nick Carter smiled as he tossed another letter across the table to the pleading Patsy.

"Put that letter in the 'No-answer-required' pile, and don't get excited," he said. "I'm going to get you into this case to-night."

"You are?" almost screamed Patsy. "Suffering crumpets! That's healthy news. Where do I come in? Have I got to lick somebody? Or is it to be the smooth and 'Thanks-very-kindly' stunt? Gee! When it comes to the fresh-laundried diplomatic game, with the honeyed words and eagle eye, you can count me in as standing on the pedestal, with both feet pressed down into the granite. Say, 'Tact' is my maiden name!"

"I'm glad to hear it," smiled Nick Carter. "Because that is the quality I expect you to use. Still, there might be a fight, too. I hope you are not opposed to a scrap, if one should turn up."

This was too much for Patsy. He could not reply. The bare idea that he, Patsy Garvan, who had licked all the boys of his weight and twenty pounds over, in his part of the Bowery, before he was sixteen, would want to sidestep a battle, completely choked him.

"All right, Patsy," laughed Nick. "Don't say anything."

"Don't say anything?" repeated Patsy, when at last he could get his breath. "No, I won't say anything. I want to see the man that gets in front of me to-night and looks crooked. Gee! I'll mash his face through his back hair. That's what I'll do!"

It was not till nine that night that Patsy knew what he was to do, however. That was when Chick led Swagara, the Japanese servant of Matthew Bentham, into Nick Carter's library, and gave him a chair in front of the detective's table.

Swagara was a polite young man, of about Patsy Garvan's size and build, who seemed to be rather anxious to get away as soon as possible.

"I have an engagement to-night," he announced, in the precise English of one who has not always known the language. "But Mr. Chickering told me that I should hear of something very much to my advantage if I came here, and, of course, I came. I am ambitious, Mr. Carter, and I never neglect anything that seems likely to help me along."

Swagara made this admission quite freely. He seemed to be frankness itself. He smiled widely, and then waited for Nick Carter to say something else, blinking amiably through rather large spectacles.

"Your engagement is with Professor Ched Ramar," remarked Nick Carter casually. "How long have you been employed by him, Mr. Swagara?"

"Six weeks," blurted out Swagara, evidently before he realized what he was saying. "That is—I have been told not to say anything about it," he added lamely.

"I know that. Ched Ramar doesn't like his affairs talked about. But you are quite safe here. I know Ched Ramar, and he has no secrets from me—I mean, of an ordinary nature. You have been with him ever since he took that house in which he lives at present—on Brooklyn Heights. You never met him until you were recommended to him by somebody whom you do not know. Ched Ramar has never told you how he came to know of you."

This was all shooting in the dark for Nick Carter.

But he knew the ways of Ched Ramar. He had not been idle all day, and he had found out from a friend of his at police headquarters considerably about Ched Ramar's methods. It is a way the police have—that of making a few secret inquiries about mysterious foreigners in New York who have plenty of money and no particular apparent business.

"It was something like that," confessed Swagara. "But not quite. Ched Ramar saw me in a restaurant on the East Side of New York, where I sometimes play chess. He is a chess player, and he got into conversation with me one night. It ended in my saying I wanted employment, and soon—I don't know how it was—I found myself engaged by him. I keep his rooms in order, and I do anything he tells me."

"Exactly. You do what he tells you, whether you want to do so or not."

As Nick Carter spoke, he moved his hands quickly before Swagara's face, at the same moment that he turned on it a fierce light from a crystal disk set at a certain angle to the electric light over his desk.

Swagara stiffened in his chair. Then he heaved a deep sigh and fell fast asleep.

"A very easy subject," observed Nick. "No wonder Ched Ramar uses him in his house. He finds it convenient to have a man he can handle as he does Swagara. Patsy!"

"I'm here!" responded Patsy promptly.

"Take a good look at this young man. Can you make up to pass for him, do you think?"

"Can I?" snorted Patsy confidently. "Watch me. Where shall I do it? Right here?"

"Yes. I'll give you the paints and things. You can take his suit of clothes when your face and hands are made up. Be careful to get the exact shading of his features. You will have to use plain-glass spectacles. You couldn't see through his. But I can give you a pair that will look exactly like them."

"Say!" exclaimed Patsy, with a chuckle, as Nick Carter brought a box of grease paints, with boxes of powder, puffs, and bits of soft chamois leather and put them on the table in front of him. "This is the easiest thing I have had for six months. Can I look like this Jap? Well, when I get through, he'll think *he's* Patsy Garvan, and he'll be asking me when I got in from Tokyo."

"I don't intend to let him ask you anything," corrected Nick Carter. "But I hope you will make yourself look like him. Unless you do, you won't be able to do anything in this case."

Patsy went on with his making up. He whispered to himself that he'd "be a native Jap or bu'st," and both Nick Carter and Chick knew it would be all right.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE SPELL.

When, at nine o'clock, Nick Carter gave final instructions to the Japanese-appearing young man, who looked at him soberly through his large spectacles, any one who knew Swagara would have been ready to swear that this was he.

Patsy Garvan had not promised more than he could achieve when he said he could make himself look like the young man from Tokyo who was expected to go to Ched Ramar's house that night.

By the deft use of grease paint, and the careful adjusting of a wig of coarse, straight black hair, he had changed his appearance so marvelously that there was nothing left of the broad, freckled face of Patsy Garvan. His features seemed to be pinched, like those of the Jap, and he had even made his gray eyes look a deep black.

It was a triumph of make-up, and Nick Carter secretly acknowledged it to himself. He did not tell Patsy what he thought. If he had, there was danger that his assistant would depend too much on his appearance, and perhaps grow careless in keeping up his character in other respects.

They had carried Swagara to an unoccupied bedroom at the top of the house, and, after undressing him and putting him into a set of pajamas owned by Patsy Garvan, had left him there in a deep sleep. Then they locked the door on the outside, to make assurance doubly sure.

"Not that there is any likelihood of his coming to his senses until I wake him," remarked Nick Carter. "Ched Ramar is not the only person in Greater New York who has made a study of mental control. I know something about hypnotism myself."

Swagara's clothes fitted Patsy as if they had been made for him, and the gentle manner of the original owner went with the costume, so that there was practically no danger that Ched Ramar would suspect the substitution.

For it was Ched Ramar that Nick Carter meant to deceive, and it was all part of a well-laid plan to get to the bottom of the mystery of the stolen records.

The great detective had not promised positively that the papers would be restored to their legitimate possessor, but he intended that they should be, nevertheless.

Nick did not believe Ched Ramar was the person he pretended to be. He doubted even whether he were an Indian at all. Well did the detective know the almost diabolical skill of the notorious Sang Tu, head of the Yellow Tong, and it would not surprise him at all to find that Ched Ramar was carrying out the behests of the unscrupulous Celestial in obtaining his strange power over Clarice Bentham.

"That there is much more in the queer performance of that Buddha than merely frightening that young girl, I am convinced," mused Nick, while Patsy was putting an overcoat over his costume, and Chick was getting into a disguise. "I'll find out what it is if I have to pull that image all to pieces."

It was at this moment that Chick came into the library, attired as a Chinaman of the poorer class. He wore the blue blouse and trousers common to laundrymen in America, and his face was of the pale yellow that is always associated with Mongolians in the average mind. He wore a large, soft black hat, which completely concealed his head. He wore a wig, with a queue, but it was not convincing if closely examined, and Nick Carter had told him to keep on his hat under all circumstances.

Patsy Garvan had his instructions, and when the taxicab in which all three were carried over to Brooklyn reached the vicinity of Borough Hall, they got out and sent the cab away.

It happened to be a cloudy night, so that when the three detectives turned into a side street, with only an occasional arc light to relieve the gloom, there was no danger of their being closely inspected by passers-by.

Three blocks from Ched Ramar's house Patsy left his companions and walked on, with the short steps peculiar

to Swagara, and presented himself at the basement door to one of the Indian guards, who opened it cautiously.

"Swagara!" whispered Patsy.

Without a word, the guard opened the door and admitted the supposed Jap. Then he closed it and walked away, leaving Patsy in a half-lighted kitchen.

"Gee! What am I to do now?" thought Patsy. "Why didn't that big chocolate drop tell me what to do?"

It was evident that Swagara had a regular routine of duties, and that Keshub, the guard, assumed he would go about it as usual.

Chance aided Patsy in his dilemma. He had taken off his overcoat and was carrying it on his arm as he walked through the kitchen to a dark hall, where he saw a flight of stairs, when the deep tones of Ched Ramar came down to him:

"Is that you, Swagara?"

Patsy did not know exactly in what terms Swagara would have answered this query. So he gave an inarticulate grunt, which he turned into a singularly distressing cough.

"What is that, Swagara? You have a cold? Well, never mind. You need not talk. You know, I have always told you I prefer you to answer me by signs, rather than by words."

"Gee! That's a good one," muttered Patsy. "He doesn't know what a fine thing he has handed me."

He walked forward, happy in the knowledge that he could not be seen well in the gloom, and waited for further instructions.

"Go to the room of the great Buddha," rumbled Ched Ramar. "Stay there. Make no sound when visitors come. I want you to see, but not to show yourself. You understand?"

Patsy bowed in acknowledgment, and began to ascend the stairs. He was wondering how he would stand the scrutiny of those fierce eyes when he should pass close to the red-shaded electric light in the main hall.

Ched Ramar gazed at him as he came up, and the eyes followed him on his way up the other stairs to the second floor of the great, shadowy house. Patsy had not been directed to the elevator. That seemed to be reserved only for the use of Ched Ramar and his guests.

He found himself in the idol room, where the dim red glow from a large lamp enabled him to see the gigantic Buddha squatting in the middle of the apartment, while other small images, equally grotesque, were ranged about.

"Say! This is a regular museum, all right," thought Patsy. "Hello! Here's a feather duster in this corner. That means that Swagara is supposed to keep things clean. Well, that's me!"

He was passing the duster over the great Buddha when he heard a sound behind him. It was Ched Ramar. He nodded approvingly as he saw how Patsy was occupied.

"It is well!" he boomed. "But when you hear the bell over there, you will know guests have arrived, and you will keep behind there."

He pointed to a space at the back of the big image, where Patsy saw there was a small door, which now stood partly open. Then, with a careless wave of the hand toward a large gong which Patsy decided was rather of Chinese, than Indian, design, Ched Ramar disappeared behind the velvet curtains which concealed the door of the elevator.

"Now is the time," thought Patsy. "I'll do what he says about going behind this big brass dub of an idol. But, first of all, I've got a little private business of my own to pull off. I didn't see anybody in the kitchen when I came through. I hope it will be the same now. If it isn't—— Well, the chief said I wasn't to mind getting into a scrap when it was forced on me. I'd just like to land on that black guy who let me in."

It was in this disrespectful way that Patsy Garvan referred to Keshub. But Keshub was not in the kitchen. He, with his fellow guard, was in the large double drawing-rooms into which Matthew Bentham, Clarice, and the others had been ushered the night before.

Patsy got down to the kitchen without meeting anybody. He slipped noiselessly down the stairs and found himself at the back door, entirely unopposed.

As he opened the door a little way, the voice of Nick Carter sounded in a whisper from the darkness:

"All right?"

"Fine as silk," was Patsy's response. "Come in."

Nick Carter, followed by Chick, stepped into the kitchen, and Patsy closed and secured the door. Then he directed the others to stand still, against the wall, where they would be in deep shadow, while he reconnoitered. Almost directly, after creeping up the back stairs and making sure the hall was empty, he was back.

Two minutes later they were all in the idol room. Patsy hastily related what his orders were—to hide behind the idol.

"He expects some guests, he says," continued Patsy. "And I think he means to put something over on them."

"I think I know who the guests will be," returned Nick. "You go to the place you've been told. Is there room for more than one there?"

He went to the cupboard Patsy had pointed out and stepped inside. With his pocket flash light he examined it, and a grim smile illumined his face as he saw how it had been arranged to deceive strangers.

There was a door at the other end of the little room, communicating with a ladder that went down from a trap in the floor. Another ladder led upward, and it did not take Nick more than a moment to see that, standing on this ladder, a person could lean forward into the hollow brass head of the Buddha, and speak through its parted lips.

"It's an old trick of the Buddhist priests," he murmured. "They keep their devotees well in hand by these supposed miracles. No doubt thousands of devout believers in this old god have listened to priests in this way, and been lent to their will because they supposed they were listening to the voice of Buddha himself. This whole trick is transparent when you have a clew."

This was all straight enough so far. But Nick Carter well knew that, without the hypnotic power that this mysterious Ched Ramar possessed, he could not have used the idol so effectively to make Clarice Bentham do what he wanted.

That the girl had been made an unconscious agent in crime he never doubted for an instant. Just how it had been done he hoped to find out now.

"I know he got a promise from Clarice to obey," he thought. "I saw how the image held her in its power. But that is as far as I have been able to go. I may even be wrong in supposing the girl will come to-night. But I think not. Let me see, they are all going to a ball to-night, Bentham told me. That means they will leave

home about eleven o'clock. It isn't ten yet. Can it be possible that she would come here first?"

"Look out!" suddenly whispered Patsy. "He's coming. I've been watching the hall below. He's on his way to the elevator. Hide somewhere, both of you!"

Nick Carter and Chick both stooped behind one of the draped tables on which the small idols were displayed, and Patsy crept behind the big Buddha.

There were a few moments of silence. Then the red curtains moved, and from the elevator came forth Ched Ramar. He held the curtains open to allow a companion also to come through. That companion was Clarice Bentham.

She wore a rich evening gown of white silk and lace. Over it was thrown a handsome opera cloak, and covering that again was another cloak of black, which draped her from head to foot.

Her eyes were wide open, as if she were staring hard. But, from his retreat at the back of the table, Nick Carter had a full view of her face in the light of the red lamp.

"She is fast asleep!" he murmured.

CHAPTER IX.

POWER AGAINST POWER.

Ched Ramar placed a chair for her in the middle of the room, where she faced the large statue. Nick observed that, as he passed her, he waved one long hand before her face—twice! There was a slight twitch in the girl's eyelids, and her stare at the image became more intense.

The tall Indian went out of the room—by the door at which Nick Carter and his companions had entered—and which was near the Buddha.

For a few moments there was stillness. Then, from somewhere came a deep, subdued voice, almost like the sighing of a strong wind.

"Come!" it said.

"What does all this mean?" whispered Chick to his chief.

"Hush!" was all Nick replied.

The girl was slowly rising from her chair. As she did so, the opera cloak dropped from her, revealing her white shoulders in the décolleté gown and the equally white arms, bare except for a jeweled bracelet on each wrist.

She stood perfectly still in front of the chair, her vacant gaze toward the brazen face of the great effigy.

"Come!" repeated the strange voice.

With measured steps she walked forward, and without hesitation went up the ladder which stood in front of the Buddha. She stood there, in about the same position that Nick Carter had seen her before. One hand rested on the idol's shoulder, and she was looking into the large eye sockets as if held under a deep spell.

"Say, chief! Let's get after this," whispered Chick restively. "We can't let this go on."

"Keep quiet, Chick!"

"You will obey—obey—obey!" moaned the deep voice.

The girl did not speak. She only stared. Nick Carter could not see her eyes now, because her face was turned away, but he had no doubt that some intelligence had come into them, and that she was looking into those strange eyes which had appeared in the idol's sockets on the former occasion.

"Speak! I command!" went on the idol. "You will obey?"

"Yes, I will obey," replied Clarice, in a low monotone.

"It will be death if you do not," said the deep voice.

"It will be death!" repeated Clarice.

"Before you leave this house, a package of papers will be placed in your hand."

"A package of papers!" she repeated, like an automaton.

"Those papers, with the exception of a few, are the same that you brought this morning."

"The same that I brought."

"You will take them from here and return them to the place from which you took them. Afterward, you will go to the ball and forget where you have been—or what you have done."

"Forget!" she answered, in the same strange, toneless accents.

"Forget utterly! Forget! Obey!"

She repeated the words slowly, and each accent was perfectly clear, although it seemed as if she uttered them without knowing that she was speaking.

It was an awe-inspiring spectacle—this fair young girl, in the fripperies of her handsome ball dress, standing there, talking to an image, and never taking her gaze from its unnatural eyes.

"That is all. You will go down the steps and seat yourself in that chair. Soon the packet of papers will be given to you. Then you will be taken downstairs to the car that brought you, and be left at the corner of your own avenue. You will not know. When you are in your home you will do as you have been commanded. Then—you will forget. Obey!"

Slowly she descended, and, with unseeing gaze, walked to the chair and sat down. From force of habit alone, she arranged her skirts, allowing her long train, which had escaped from the loop that ordinarily held it up, to sweep the floor.

"Say, chief! Are you there?"

It was Patsy Garvan. He had come out from behind the idol, and was looking about the room for his chief. He took no notice of the girl in the chair, and she betrayed no consciousness of having heard or seen him.

Nick Carter came out from behind the table, and went over to Clarice. She seemed not to know that he stood in front of her, and when he passed his hand across her eyes, they did not wink.

"She's in a deep hypnotic sleep," he murmured. "Well, I'll leave her so for the present. What did you see back there, Patsy?"

"It was all such a bald fake, that it isn't worth talking about," replied Patsy. "He just stood up on the step-ladder and gave her all that bluff, with his head shoved into the hollow. When he got through, he came down and told me to keep the door of the cupboard shut until he got back."

"I see. Is that all?"

"Not quite. Before he went up on that ladder, he tried to hypnotize me. But I was wise and I kept thinking about other things, and he couldn't work it. I know how to beat that game. You've taught me that."

"Yes. A hypnotic subject can often resist if he or she has a strong will," replied Nick Carter. "I shouldn't like to say that everybody could do it, however."

"Maybe not. But they can't bluff me," chuckled Patsy.

"I've had that tried on me too often, and no one ever got away with it yet."

Nick knew that this was true. He had seen too many proofs that Patsy Garvan had a powerful will of his own to fear that he could be easily put under the influence of such a man as this East Indian. Neither he nor Chick were the kind of young men who would yield without a fight to an attack, whether physical or mental.

"Look out!" suddenly whispered Patsy. "Duck! He's coming back!"

He slipped behind the idol, dragging Nick Carter and Chick with him.

"There's room for all of us in here," went on Patsy, in a scarcely audible tone. "But keep quiet. If he comes back here, we've got to land on him. That will be all. I don't care if he does come."

"Hush!" warned Nick.

If there was any weakness in Patsy Garvan which had to be controlled, it was a disposition to talk too much.

The curtain at the elevator parted, and a man came through.

"Gee!" whispered Patsy. "It's the fellow they call Keshub!"

"One of the guards," added Nick.

Keshub was not as tall as Ched Ramar. But he was a big fellow, and he had all the dignity of the Oriental, even though he was not of as high caste as Ched Ramar was supposed to be.

He strode into the room and looked at the big idol. Then he made a deep salaam to the image, joining the tips of the fingers of his two hands over and in front of his bowed head as he bent low, and dropping them to his sides as he straightened up.

"Teaching old Brassy to swim, I guess," grinned Patsy. Nick gave him a hard dig in the side, to quiet him, although he found it hard to repress a smile at this irreverent designation of the god as "old Brassy."

Keshub turned from the idol and strode over to Clarice. Nick saw then—as he cautiously peeped around the idol, and partly concealed by draperies—that the Indian had taken from his clothing a package of papers, held together by a rubber band.

"Take!" he said curtly.

The girl sat perfectly quiet, and appeared not to hear the word. He repeated it, at the same time lifting the girl's right hand and placing the packet in her fingers.

The touch of the packet seemed to revive some sleeping memory in her being. She clutched it tightly and arose from her seat.

"Obey! Forget!" she murmured.

"I will return in a short time and take you out to the car," said Keshub. "Stay here."

Whether the girl heard and understood this Nick Carter could not tell. All he knew was that she stood perfectly still, her eyes staring into vacancy, but always turned toward the idol, while Keshub disappeared between the curtains to the elevator.

"Now, Patsy! Go to that elevator and see if you can fasten it so that no one can get out of it. There is a door with gilt railings. I think it can be bolted from this side. I noticed it when I was in this place before."

Patsy ran to obey his chief, and a low chuckle told that he had found the bolt referred to. Then there was a click as the bolt slipped into the socket, and Patsy came back.

By this time Nick Carter had begun something that had been in his mind while Keshub talked to the girl. He went to her, and staring straight at her eyes, whispered:

"Obey! The packet!"

Mechanically she held out the packet and he took it from her unresisting fingers. Then, as if another power were fighting against the influence which Nick Carter had brought to bear, she held out her hand as if to get the packet back.

He waved his hands before her face and whispered again, in the same sharp, staccato tones he had used before:

"Go to the ladder and listen again to what will be said to you from the mouth of Buddha."

She moved across the floor, and reaching the ladder, went up in the mechanical way that always distinguished her in that particular action. When she was in her usual place there, with one hand on the shoulder of the idol, Nick slipped behind, and, going up the hidden ladder, took his place in the hollow where he could lean forward into the head.

"Chick!" he called down to his assistant. "If anybody comes, tell me. Then, if you must, bring him down at all risks. But—make no noise."

"Am I in on this?" asked Patsy.

"Of course."

"Good! Here's where we shake down the plums. But telling us not to make any noise sort of puts prickles on the job."

With his two assistants at the foot of the ladder, ready to fly at any intruder, Nick Carter leaned forward, and, in lowered tones, spoke through the brazen lips of the great Buddha.

"You will obey!" were his first words.

As he spoke he fastened his gaze firmly on the eyes of the girl, and was encouraged when she looked steadily at him. The vacant expression had left them. This told him that he had been able to take the place of Ched Ramar, and that the hypnotic power exerted by the East Indian had been maintained by himself.

That it would not be easy to make this sort of transfer he had realized from the first. But he believed it could be done if he could concentrate himself sufficiently to overwhelm the mentality of the subject. He had succeeded now, almost beyond his hopes. The girl would do anything he commanded.

CHAPTER X.

HIS HOUR OF SUCCESS.

"You will obey!" repeated Nick Carter.

"Obey!" she responded dreamily.

"That is well. Tell me what you did when you got the packet you brought to me this morning. You remember that it *was* this morning?"

"It was this morning," she replied, repeating the last few words of his query, as was always her way.

"Where did you get them? The library?"

"The library."

"Who showed you where they were?"

"Where they were?" she repeated.

"Yes. Tell me."

"He did," she answered. "The man I fear."

"What's his name?"

But to this there was no reply. She seemed to have no remembrance of names. Perhaps she never had known the name of this man she feared.

"Is it the man who speaks through Buddha?"

She seemed to wrestle hard with this question, as if trying to comprehend its meaning. At last she slowly nodded.

"You are sure?"

"Sure!" she repeated.

"That is enough," said Nick Carter. "The packet will again be placed in your hands. Take it, as you were commanded, and put it where you got it—in the table leg."

A gleam of understanding came into her eyes, that had in it more of memory than she had shown before. Nick Carter knew then that this girl, under the fiendish influence of Ched Ramar, had indeed robbed her father without knowing that she had done so. A half-repressed ejaculation dangerously near an oath broke from the detective's lips, as he came down the ladder.

Hurriedly he took the packet from his pocket, where he had slipped it before ascending the ladder, and looked through it under the red lamp in front of the idol.

The girl had already descended, and was walking, like a somnambulist, toward her chair.

Nick Carter ran through the half dozen large sheets of manuscript, and saw that none of them bore reference to the Yellow Tong. All were of a character that would be valuable to the scientific world, but not one was concerned with the secret, far-reaching organization whose methods and intentions Washington was so eager to know something about.

"The cunning wretches," he murmured. "They have taken what they want, and are returning these, so that they shall not furnish a clew to the others. Well, I think I shall beat their game. I'm going to find out where those other papers are before I leave this house."

He walked over to the girl and gave her the packet. Then he said to her, in the quiet, even accents which seemed to penetrate easiest to her beclouded brain:

"Take the packet back and put it into the hands of your father. You understand that. Father."

"Father!" she repeated dully.

"Look out, chief!" whispered Patsy. "I hear the elevator."

Nick and Chick got back to the idol and secreted themselves. But Patsy went to the elevator door and unlocked it—just in time to admit Ched Ramar and Keshub.

"Why did you lock the door?" thundered Ched Ramar, at Patsy.

Patsy shrugged his shoulders in a way that he had seen Swagara do it, and there was an expression of bland protest in his yellowed face, as if he considered he were being shouted at unjustly.

He did not speak, but contented himself with pointing to Clarice, who sat still where Nick Carter had just left her.

"She wouldn't have gone away, if that is what you mean," growled Ched Ramar. "Keshub, take her down to the limousine and see that she gets home in safety."

Keshub salaamed. Then he went over to Clarice, touched her arm, and pointed to the curtains shadowing the elevator door. She went over to it, quite docile, and Keshub accompanied her down, out of sight. Ched Ramar let the curtains fall together.

"Watch the doors and windows, Swagara," he ordered briefly. "There is no danger. But—watch them."

Patsy responded with a funny little bow peculiar to Swagara, and stood back while Ched Ramar went up the stepladder on which Clarice had stood, and regarded the great brass face of the Buddha for a few moments in silence.

"Great Buddha," he muttered, at last. "How many secrets dost thou hide! But how willing art thou to give them up when he who has the right puts the request! Siddartha, holy one! It is thy servant who makes the demand. Give him what he seeks!"

He placed his hand on the left arm of the idol, and his long fingers fumbled under the head.

As is usually the case with statues of Buddha, the arm lay across his lap in a negligent way, while the other was stretched forward on his knee. Ched Ramar was pressing a certain little knob under the brass hand. This released a spring, as was evidenced by the slight click that Nick Carter and his assistants could hear.

"That is well, holy one!" murmured Ched Ramar.

He took the hand of the god and raised it slowly, as if it were of great weight—as indeed it was. When he held it clear of the lap, there was revealed a square hole beneath, like a box, some eight inches square.

Into this square opening Ched Ramar dipped his fingers, bringing them out immediately with several papers rolled up, and fastened by a silken cord made of many strands of different colors twisted together.

"My task is nearly done!" exclaimed Ched Ramar, smiling. "It has been a hard one, but the result is worth it. My great master, Sang Tu, will be pleased. Much pleased!"

"Will he?" thought Nick Carter. "Well, it isn't all over yet."

Still smiling—but in a grave way, as if he felt that he should not permit himself thus to show joy—Ched Ramar lowered the brazen arm slowly to its former position, and a click announced that it was fastened in its place. When this had been done, no one not in the secret would have suspected that there was anything of the kind there.

"Did you see that, chief?" whispered Chick.

"Yes. Keep quiet. We want the papers. But we want him, too."

"That's what," put in Patsy. "And that Keshub and the other coffee-colored guy, too. There may be others in the house as well as them. There are some maids, we know."

"They are probably in another part of the house," answered Nick. "We need not trouble about the maids. What we want is this fellow, papers and all. Keep ready!"

Ched Ramar stepped over the red lamp and looked carefully at the papers he had got from the lap of the image. His sinister smile again spread over his dark countenance, and he muttered to himself in his own tongue.

"This is all!" he suddenly exclaimed in English. "I will take these records to Sang Tu in the morning. Meanwhile, they shall not leave me. I do not trust any one. I will not go to bed. Such sleep as I need I can get here, in this chair."

He walked over to the chair in which the girl had sat. It was very large, and when she had been in it had seemed actually to swallow her up. Even Chad Ramar, tall as he was, had plenty of room to curl up in it.

He tried it in this way. Then he arose and strode

over to the big idol, as if to look behind it. Nick Carter, Chick, and Patsy were standing ready to fling themselves upon him.

But he changed his mind, when nearly up to them, and contented himself with calling sternly:

"Swagara!"

For a moment Patsy Garvan had forgotten his assumed name. He made no move to go out. Instead, he held his automatic pistol ready to be used either as a club or a firearm. Nick Carter brought him to himself with a sharp tug at his elbow.

"Go out, confound you!" he whispered. "You are Swagara!"

"Gee! So I am!"

"Swagara!" called Ched Ramar, again, in a fiercer tone. "Come here!"

Patsy slipped out from behind the statue and made his Swagara bow with due humility.

Ched Ramar raised his fist, as if he would bring it down on Patsy's shoulder. It was as well that he did not carry out his intention, for Patsy surely would have forgotten his assumed character and retaliated with another and harder blow.

"You deserve to be kicked, you dog!" snarled Ched Ramar. "You are to come quickly when I call. But let that pass. You will keep awake in this room till I tell you that you may sleep. Understand?"

Patsy bowed. He never had spoken more than a word or two to the Indian. He had a presentiment that if ever he did so, he would be known as a bogus Swagara at once.

"Very well," went on Ched Ramar. I would sleep for an hour—in this chair. Keshub and Meirum are asleep in the hall without. They will not come in unless I summon them. But you! You are not to sleep at all. Now, walk over there to the large Buddha and let me see that you are quite awake now. Go over and march back. Do as I bid you."

Somehow, Patsy Garvan did not exactly understand what was meant by this command, and he hesitated when he got to the idol. Turning toward Ched Ramar, he was about to give him a pleading look, which would mean that he wanted clearer instructions.

This angered Ched Ramar, and he bounded from the chair, drawing a large jeweled scimitar that he generally wore, concealed by the folds of his robe.

Flourishing this weapon, he flew at Patsy, as if he would strike him down with it. The belligerent action was a great deal like his former one, only that this time he held a deadly weapon, instead of merely menacing with his fist.

"Gee!" shouted Patsy, forgetting entirely the part he was playing. "If you don't drop that cheese knife, I'll plug you as if you were a rat!"

He drew his pistol as he spoke and leveled it at the head of the surprised Indian.

Instantly it occurred to the cunning mind of Ched Ramar that there was treachery somewhere, and he leaped forward to seize Patsy. Rascal as he might be, there was no cowardice about Ched Ramar.

He did not catch Patsy, however. Instead, the supposed Japanese suddenly stooped, and just as the Indian got to him, he arose and sent his fist into the brown neck.

Ched Ramar uttered a choking gasp, and dashed behind the Buddha. As he got there, he found himself facing not only Patsy Garvan, but Nick Carter and Chick, as well. All three were in hostile attitudes that could not be mistaken for a moment.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRASH OF THE IDOL.

The utter astonishment in the face of Ched Ramar when he saw these three men where he had expected to find one only—and he a submissive servant—made Patsy Garvan emit a shrill chuckle. Patsy never would hold back his emotions when they got a good grip on him.

"Gee! Look at the map of him!" he shouted.

"Who are you?" roared Ched Ramar. "You're not Swagara!"

"Not by a jugful!" returned Patsy Garvan. "There isn't anything like that in me. Say, chief! We want to work quick! There's two more right outside the door."

Nick Carter stepped in front of the East Indian and held up his hand for a chance to speak.

"Ched Ramar," he said in his usual cool tones, "the game is up. You have some papers in your pocket that you stole from Professor Matthew Bentham. You got them with the help of the man you call Swagara, who is already my prisoner."

"Prisoner?" broke from Ched Ramar's lips before he knew that he was speaking. "Prisoner? Who are you?"

"My name is Nicholas Carter," answered Nick.

"Nicholas Carter? Ah! Yes! I never saw you before. But your picture is in our archives. We all know what you look like. If it had been lighter here, I should have recognized you at once. Well, Mr. Nicholas Carter, all I have to say to you is—this!"

The curved scimitar, with its richly jeweled hilt and its heavy, Damascus-steel blade, swept through the air like a great half moon of fire, as it caught and reflected the red glow of the lamp. The next moment, it circled Nick Carter's neck, and seemed as if it must actually sever his head from his body.

But the detective had been in critical situations of this kind before, and he knew how to meet even an attack by such an unusual weapon as this cruel, curved saber.

He stooped just in time. He had very little to spare, for the keen blade caught the top of his soft hat and actually shaved away a thin sliver as clean as if done by a razor. In fact, the convex edge of the scimitar was ground almost to a razor edge.

The force of the blow made Ched Ramar swing around, so that he could not recover himself immediately. Nick took advantage of this momentary confusion to close with the tall Indian and grasp the handle of the saber.

There was a short and desperate struggle. The muscles of Ched Ramar were as tough and flexible as Nick Carter's, and the detective knew he had a foe worthy of his best endeavors.

Up and down in the narrow space behind the big idol they fought, each trying to gain possession of the scimitar.

Nick did not want to make noise enough to attract outside attention. But he soon realized that this was something he could not prevent—the more so as Ched Ramar seemed desirous of causing as much disturbance as possible.

A banging at the door explained why Ched Ramar had made as much noise as he could.

"Now, Mr. Nicholas Carter," hissed the tall Indian, "I

think you will find you have stepped into a trap. I have two men outside that door who will do anything they are commanded, and never speak of it afterward. You have been in countries where men are slaves to other men, I know. You shall see what my men will do for me."

During this speech, which was delivered jerkily, as the two struggled for possession of the scimitar, the banging at the door increased in violence. Chick and Patsy were against it on the inside, trying to prevent its being battered down.

"Chick!" called Nick. "Come here!"

Chick looked over his shoulder.

"If I leave this door, Patsy can't hold it by himself. It takes all we can both do to hold those fellows back."

"Never mind!" returned Nick. "Come here!"

As Chick came toward the two powerful fighters, Ched Ramar laughed derisively.

"The door will fall," he shouted. "When it does, you will wish you were out of this place. I'm glad you are here. It is fortunate."

He wrenched with tremendous energy to get the scimitar away from Nick Carter. But the detective's grip was not to be shaken. He held the handle of the weapon at top and bottom, with the Indian's two hands doubled around it between. Neither could gain any advantage over the other.

"What am I to do?" queried Chick, looking at his chief, and making a grab at the handle of the scimitar.

"Don't bother with this," directed Nick sharply. "Feel in the front of this man's robe and get the papers he has hidden there."

"What?" bellowed Ched Ramar. "You'll try such a thing as that? Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, as the door broke down, throwing Patsy Garvan to the floor. "Get these men, Keshub! And you, Meirum! You did well to come! You heard the noise? Yes? Now to your duty!"

Instantly there was was a fray in which all six were engaged. The two guards were nearly as strong as their employer, and all three of the Indians were vindictive, and determined to be victorious.

"Get the one who is trying to rob me!" shouted Ched Ramar.

The two big guards rushed on Chick together, and with such sudden violence that they hurled him away before he could set himself for resistance.

"Look out, Patsy!" cried Chick. "Get those papers! The chief wants them! Didn't you hear him?"

"Did I hear him?" roared Patsy Garvan. "Well, I guess I did! Let me in there!"

As Chick was hurled aside, Patsy rushed at Ched Ramar and sent his head full into the Indian's stomach. Patsy had had training in rough-and-tumble warfare in the Bowery in his younger days, and he still remembered the tricks that had availed him then.

The concussion was too much for Ched Ramar. It doubled him up, so that Nick Carter got a better hold on the handle of the scimitar than he had been able to obtain heretofore. At first he thought he had won the weapon altogether. But Ched Ramar's hold was too sure for that. He still retained his grip, but not quite so good a one as he had had, because there was not so much room for his fingers.

As Ched Ramar bent forward, still intent on not letting the scimitar out of his grasp, Patsy reached in among the flowing robes that were flying in all directions in the turbulence of the fight, and, after a little fumbling, felt the end of the packet of papers sticking from an inner pocket.

"Got them!" he shouted, as he dragged out the papers and passed them to Chick. "Gee! This is where we make the riffle!" cried Patsy delightedly. "Hand them to the chief!"

Nick Carter shook his head quickly. He was holding Ched Ramar with both hands.

"No! Keep them yourself, Chick, until I've got this man where I want him. They'll be safe enough now. Patsy, lay out that big fellow behind you with your gun, before it is too late."

Patsy employed a little ruse, and grinned as he saw how successful it was. Turning swiftly, he presented his automatic pistol at the head of Meirum, and there was a glint in the eye looking along the barrel which convinced the man Patsy meant business.

As a result of his terror, Meirum backed away quickly, and let go of Patsy's arm, which he had seized as Patsy handed the papers to Chick.

On the instant, Patsy changed ends with his pistol, and brought the heavy butt down on Meirum's turbaned head with a crash that made nothing of the white linen swathed about it. A turban is not much protection against a hard blow with a steel-bound pistol butt.

As Meirum went down, there were only the two left—Keshub and Ched Ramar.

"Take those papers, Keshub!" cried Ched Ramar. "Quick! Before he goes away."

"I'm not going away!" interposed Chick. "I've something else to do before I go."

He threw his arms suddenly around the big Keshub as he spoke, and forced him backward.

"Pull that turban off the other fellow's head!" he shouted to Patsy. "It will make a good rope."

This was a happy thought. Patsy unceremoniously stripped the white turban from the head of the unconscious Meirum, and found himself with a long strip of strong, white linen, which would, indeed, make a serviceable rope.

But Keshub had not been overcome yet. He was almost as powerful as Ched Ramar, and quite as full of fight. He tore himself out of Chick's grasp and rushed to the aid of his employer. The two of them set to work to get the papers from Chick.

Nick Carter was equally resolved that Ched Ramar should not interfere with Chick. He argued that Patsy Garvan and Chick were quite able to deal with Keshub together—even if Chick could not do it alone.

"But Chick could do it himself," he muttered. "Only that it might require a little more time."

It seemed as if Ched Ramar might have guessed what was passing in the mind of Nick Carter, for he redoubled his efforts to get away, scimitar and all, to go to the aid of his man.

"You may as well give up, Ched Ramar," panted Nick Carter—for the long fight was beginning to tell on his wind, just as it did on his foe's. "We've got you. We have the papers, and one of your men is done right here. Another is a prisoner in my house. What is more, I know who you are."

"I am Ched Ramar!" cried the Indian proudly.

"Perhaps. I don't know what your name may be. The

main thing is that you are a member of the Yellow Tong, and that you are trying to steal these papers for your chief, the infamous Sang Tu."

"He is not infamous!" shouted Ched Ramar indignantly. "He is the greatest man in the world to-day, and it will not be long before he will control every nation on earth."

"Beginning with the United States, I suppose?" exclaimed Nick Carter ironically.

"Yes. We have this country of yours mapped out and given to different sections of our great organization already," snarled Ched Ramar. "As for giving up, why—see here!"

He bent almost double, as he exerted every ounce of his immense strength to tear the scimitar away from the detective. The latter felt the handle slipping through his fingers. But he had strength, too, and in another instant he had gained a firmer hold than ever, as he pushed with all his might against the powerful bulk of his towering antagonist.

For a moment neither side gave way. It was like two mountains pressing against each other. No one could say what the end might be. They might stand thus for an indefinite period.

But they didn't. Nick Carter felt his foe yield ever so little—not more than a fraction of an inch. But the fact remained that he had given way slightly, and Nick was quick to take advantage of anything that would help him in such a desperate fight as this.

He pushed harder, and back went Ched Ramar two or three inches this time.

"Keshub!" shouted Ched Ramar.

But Keshub had his own troubles just now. Chick had applied a backheel to him, and was slowly pushing him backward, until he must fall flat on his back, while Patsy hovered above them and grumbled because he couldn't get into the fight.

"Keep off, Patsy!" cried Chick. "Don't come into this, or you'll spoil it. Don't you see that?"

"Gee! I can see it, all right. But it's mighty tough on me. I've been shut out of this whole circus. When this is over, I'm a goat if I don't go out and hit a policeman. I've got to get action somehow."

Nick Carter saw that he had Ched Ramar giving way now, and he determined to make an end of the struggle without further waste of time. The fight had been conducted very quietly. It had not even disturbed the two maids, asleep upstairs, and there was no reason to suppose the fracas had been heard on the street.

"You think you have me, I suppose?" hissed Ched Ramar, as he fought with all the energy he had left.

Nick Carter did not answer. He knew that the cunning Indian was trying to make him talk, and thus divert his attention. Instead, he gave his enemy a sudden and harder twist that took him an inch farther back.

There was an inarticulate ejaculation of rage from the Indian, and his black eyes glowed fiercely through his glasses. He stopped for a second the onward rush of his assailant. Then, as he was obliged to give way, he jerked up his arms and tried to bring the edge of the scimitar across Nick Carter's face.

The attempt failed, but it brought the battle to an abrupt end.

As Nick Carter leaped aside to avoid the scimitar, he kicked the feet of Ched Ramar from under him. Back went the Indian, crashing against the gigantic image of Buddha behind him.

For a moment the enormous idol rocked on its pedestal. Then, as it lost its balance, down it came, pedestal and all, toward the two fighters!

One corner of the pedestal struck Nick Carter on the shoulder and laid him out flat on his back.

He was not hurt, and he jumped to his feet on the instant. As he did so, he shook his head—partly in satisfaction, but still more in horror.

The body of Ched Ramar lay under the great idol, and the brazen knees were pressed into its victim's head, crushing it out of all semblance to what it had been!

Ched Ramar had paid the penalty of his rascality through the very agent he had employed to make an innocent girl a participant in his crime.

"Look out, Chick!" shouted Nick Carter, as he saw Keshub breaking away from his assistant's hold. "He's going to get out, if you don't hurry."

But Patsy Garvan was on the alert. He was only too glad to get into the fight in any way, and he tripped Keshub, just as he leaped through the doorway, in a very skillful and workmanlike manner.

"Oh, I guess not!" observed Patsy. "I saw you getting up after Chick had laid you out, and I was looking for you to make a break like this. Come back here!"

The cloth from Meirum's turban was bound about Keshub, and he was laid on the floor by the side of the knocked-out Meirum. Then, with considerable exertion, the image of Buddha was rolled completely away from the body of Ched Ramar, so that Nick could look it over with his flash light.

"He died on the instant," decided Nick. "Cover it with one of those curtains, while I go downstairs and telephone the police station."

In due course, the remains of Ched Ramar were viewed by the coroner, and a verdict of "accidental death" was rendered.

Very little got into the papers about it. This was arranged by Nick Carter. He did not want too much publicity while any of the Yellow Tong were still likely to be active. It might interfere with work he had yet to do.

Keshub and Meirum, as well as Swagara, were not prosecuted. Nick made up his mind that he could better afford to let them escape than to draw general attention to the rascality they had been carrying on.

So he put them aboard a tramp steamer bound for Japan, and India, and which would not touch anywhere until it got to Yokohama. Swagara was to be put off there.

The next port would be Bombay. Both Keshub and Meirum said they would never leave Indian soil again if once they could get back to it, and there is no reason to suppose they were telling anything but the truth.

Matthew Bentham never knew the part his daughter had played in taking and returning the precious papers. Nick Carter decided that no good end would be served by letting him find it out.

Even Clarice herself was quite unaware of what she had done. The subtle influence of hypnotism had permeated her whole being at the time, and when she came to herself, it was entirely without recollection of what she had passed through when in the power of another and stronger will. Hynotism is a wonderful science.

"Is this all of the Yellow Tong, chief?" asked Chick, smiling.

"There will be no end to this investigation until I have my hands on Sang Tu," replied Nick Carter sternly.

"I thought so," was Chick's reply.

THE END.

"The Doom of Sang Tu; or, Nick Carter's Golden Foe," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 153, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out August 14th. In this story you will read of the great detective's ultimate triumph over the shrewd leader of the Yellow Tong. Then, too, you will also find an installment of a new serial, together with several other articles of interest.

Sheridan of the U. S. Mail.

By RALPH BOSTON.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 148 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XXII.

A QUESTION OF COLOR.

After Owen had seen Jake Hines safely locked up in a local police station, he went back to Dallas to fulfill this mission which had brought him to Chicago. "I want you to explain to me about that letter you got from the mail box," he said. "You got the wrong letter by a mistake, of course? Instead of the one which you had mailed to your brother, you got the pink envelope which the Reverend Doctor Moore dropped into the box?"

"Yes," answered Dallas, "when the letter carrier opened the box and took out the mail, and I caught sight of that square, pink envelope lying on top of the heap, I jumped to the conclusion that it was mine, and I grabbed it and hurried away, fearing that he might change his mind about giving it to me. You see, Owen, I was very much excited. The letter which I had received from my scapegrace brother that day was very startling. It informed me that he was in great trouble, and was about to do something desperate—the letter didn't state what—and that the only thing which could prevent him from taking this step was my coming to Chicago immediately. It warned me, too, that I mustn't let a soul in New York know where I was going."

"That was Hines' work, of course," said Owen. "He couldn't come to you in New York, so he contrived that scheme to bring you out to him."

"Yes; but I didn't suspect anything like that. I was very much worried. From the tone of Chester's letter I feared that he contemplated suicide, and I was awfully scared. But I didn't very well see how I could get out to him, because"—she hesitated, and blushed painfully—"because I—I didn't have the fare, Owen. I had been sending more than I could spare to Chester recently, to help him to get out of a scrape, and I was very hard up. So I had to write him that I was very sorry, but I really couldn't come to Chicago."

"And then?" said Owen eagerly.

"Then, after I had mailed that letter, I suddenly thought of the engagement ring which you had given to me, dear. I hated to pawn it, of course, but I was so scared about Chester, and I—I thought you wouldn't mind, under the circumstances."

"So that's how you raised the fare to Chicago!" said Owen, with a smile of great relief.

"Yes; and when I found that I could go, naturally I wanted to get back that letter; for I feared the effect it might have upon my brother."

"So you waited at the box until Pop Andrews came to collect the mail, and you prevailed upon him to violate the rules and let you have it, and he handed you the wrong letter," said Owen. "So far, so good. And now, Dallas, when you found that you had the Reverend Doctor Moore's pink envelope, with the hundred-dollar bill inside, what did you do with it?"

"When I got to my room at the boarding house, I started to tear the letter up without opening it, still thinking, of course, that it was the one which I had sent Chester. When I caught sight of the money inside, and realized the mistake I had made, I was in a quandary. The hundred-dollar bill and the letter which the envelope contained were each in four pieces. I was afraid to go to the post office and explain how it had happened, because I knew that if I did so it would get Carrier Andrews into trouble for violating the rules. So I decided to cut some sticking plaster into small strips, and paste the pieces together. I made quite a neat job of it; then I addressed a fresh envelope, inclosed the patched-up letter and hundred-dollar bill, and dropped it into a mail box."

Owen drew a deep breath of relief. "And I suppose the envelope which you addressed was a white one?"

"Yes. I didn't have any pink ones at the boarding house."

"And that explains, of course, why they thought at Branch X Y that the letter was missing from the mail. Naturally they didn't think to go through the white envelopes. No doubt by this time the Reverend Doctor Moore's friend in Pennsylvania is in receipt of his hundred-dollar bill. Your explanation, Dallas, clears the mystery! What a gink I am not to have thought of that solution before!"

But suddenly a puzzled look came to Inspector Sheridan's face. "There's one point that isn't cleared up yet: If you got the wrong pink envelope, Dallas, what became of the right one? The letter which you sent to your brother ought to have been in the mail still."

"And so it was," answered Dallas, with a smile. "When I reached here I found that Chester was already in receipt of it."

"But how could that be? They searched all through the mail at Branch X Y, and failed to find any square, pink envelope."

"The letter which Chester received was in a square, white envelope," said Dallas. "I noticed that as soon as he showed it to me. And," she went on, with a puzzled frown, "that's something which I can't understand at all. I know that it sometimes happens that in a box of colored stationery a white envelope will get mixed with the tinted ones, but I am ready to take oath that the envelope in which I inclosed Chester's letter was pink. If it wasn't so perfectly ridiculous I should be inclined to believe that it must have changed color while in the mail."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Owen, an inspiration coming to him. "I think I've got the answer. This en-

velope was exactly the same shape and design as the rest in the box, wasn't it, Dallas?"

"Yes; exactly the same as the others, except that it was white instead of pink."

"And it appeared to you to be pink?"

"Yes; and I am not color blind—if that is what you are going to imply," replied Dallas, mildly indignant.

"I'm not quite so sure of that," said Owen, with a smile. "I'll grant that you are not color blind under ordinary conditions, but these were not ordinary conditions."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It was a dark afternoon when you addressed that envelope, and the electric light over your desk at the office was turned on, wasn't it?"

The girl nodded. "Yes, that's so; but still——"

"And the electric globe over your desk throws such a strong light that you have a piece of paper around it to shade it, haven't you, Dallas? A piece of red paper; I noticed it the other day."

A look of enlightenment came to the girl's face. "Why, yes; I understand how it happened now. That red shade around the electric light made that white envelope look pink, just like the rest."

"Exactly!" cried Owen happily; "and that solves the mystery of the missing pink envelope. I'm mighty glad now that I followed you to Chicago, Dallas."

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNTO THE LAST.

When Samuel J. Coggswell learned that his disciple and confidential man, Jake Hines, had been brought back to New York under arrest, he was greatly perturbed.

"And what does he say?" he asked the reporter who brought him the news. "What does the misguided young man say? I suppose he has been making some sensational and, of course, absolutely false statements about me, eh?" He looked at his visitor anxiously.

"On the contrary," the newspaper man replied, "they can't get a thing out of Jake, Mr. Coggswell. He refuses to talk."

An expression of great relief came to the district leader's face. "Ah!" he exclaimed, his ears wiggling rapidly as he spoke. "Poor Jake, poor Jake! So they can't get a word out of him, eh? Jake always was a stubborn young man—a very stubborn young man."

After the newspaper man had gone, Boss Coggswell sat in his private office at the clubhouse, smiling confidently to himself.

"I might have known Jake wouldn't squeal," he mused. "He's not that kind. Even though they've got him, I guess I'm safe."

Even in the worst of men there is usually some redeeming trait. Crook, grafter, and scoundrel as Jake Hines was, there was one thing which, perhaps, should be put down to his credit—his unswerving loyalty to his master.

The prosecuting attorney, certain that Samuel J. Coggswell was behind the conspiracy against Owen Sheridan, which had landed Jake in the toils, and anxious to get the bigger fish in his net, if possible, offered to deal leniently with Hines if he would make a confession involving the boss. But Jake stubbornly refused.

"No," he said, "I ain't convicted yet, and while Boss Coggswell's my friend I won't give up hope of beatin' this case. But if the worst comes to worst, and I have to go up—well, I'll be the goat. You won't get a squeal out of me!"

Coggswell made every effort to keep his subordinate from going to jail; that is to say, every effort which it was possible to make in secret. He got a bondsman for Jake, even though the latter's bail was set at a very high figure, and arranged for the young man to skip his bail and escape beyond the jurisdiction of the courts before the case came up for trial.

But this plan was defeated by the vigilance of the prosecuting attorney, who, anticipating such a move, had Hines watched so closely by detectives that it was impossible for him to get away.

Failing in this attempt, Coggswell retained the very best lawyers obtainable to defend his faithful follower; and when this array of legal talent met with defeat, and Hines was found guilty by a jury, the politician exerted all his powerful influence to save the convicted man from a jail sentence. But this attempt also failed, and Jake Hines had to go to prison.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SAD FAREWELL.

The young politician took his medicine with a stoicism worthy of a better cause. There was actually a broad grin on his beefy face as he heard the judge utter the words which condemned him to several years behind prison bars. But it was not wholly stoicism. His attitude was partly due to the fact that even at that desperate stage of the game he had not quite lost faith in the power of his master and mentor to aid him.

"I won't be in the jug long," he declared confidently to the deputy sheriff who led him, shackled, out of the courtroom. "Boss Coggswell will get me out. His pull will win me a pardon, all right. So long as he's my friend I'm not worryin'. And not only will he get me free," he added, a glint coming into his beady eyes, "but you can bet he'll make it hot for everybody that's had a hand in sending me up. That judge'll get his for handing me such a stiff sentence; the district attorney will be made to regret that he wouldn't let up when the boss gave him the hint; and as for that big stiff of a Sheridan—well, I'm willing to bet a thousand to a hundred that he won't be holding that inspector's job very long. They'll all be made to feel that it ain't healthy to defy a man like Samuel J. Coggswell."

Just as the train which was to carry him off to prison was about to pull out of the station, Jake received a visit from the man in whom he had such faith. Coggswell rarely yielded to sentiment when it was against his interest to do so, but in this instance, although he realized that he could ill afford to be seen shaking hands with the convicted man, he decided that the latter's loyalty in refusing to "squeal" was deserving of this tribute; so he was there to say farewell to his faithful henchman.

"I need scarcely say," he explained unctuously to the group of newspaper men who were on the platform to see Hines depart, "that there is no man who condemns and deplores more than I the atrocious crime for which that wretched young man is about to pay the penalty. Still, I cannot quite forget the time when poor, misguided Jake Hines was an honest man, who enjoyed my esteem

and friendship. It is in memory of those days, gentlemen, that I am here now to give him a parting handclasp. Who knows," he added, raising his eyes piously toward the ceiling of the train shed, "but what the lingering recollection of that last touch of an old friend's hand may soften his heart and cause his feet to seek once more the straight and narrow path after he emerges from his gloomy prison cell?"

Having delivered himself of this worthy sentiment, and noting, with satisfaction, that several of the scribes were taking it down verbatim, Mr. Coggswell stepped aboard the train and approached the seat which contained Jake and the deputy sheriff.

"How do you feel, my boy?" he inquired, in a sympathetic whisper.

"First class, boss," Hines assured him, with a cheerful grin. "Say, it's mighty white of you to come to see me off, but you shouldn't have done it. It might cause talk."

"Let evil tongues wag if they will," was the sententious response. "You ought to know me better, Jake, than to think for a moment that I would consider myself at all in a case like this. I hope, my boy, that you are accepting this unfortunate situation with philosophy and—er—are still determined not to talk."

"Don't worry, boss," said Hines, with another grin. "They're not going to get a word out of me, even though I have to stay in the jug for the full term of my sentence. I'm no squealer."

Hearing which, Coggswell exhaled a sigh of relief, and, as the train was about to get under way, took a hurried leave of his unfortunate lieutenant.

"Boss," Hines said to him wistfully, as they once more clasped hands, "I'm sorry I won't be there to help you at the coming primary fight. I'm afraid you'll miss me."

"I'm afraid I shall, Jake," Coggswell answered, taking care not to speak above a whisper. "I'm afraid I shall."

And his ears were not wiggling as he said it.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST STAND.

Deprived of the services of his able lieutenant, Boss Coggswell faced the coming primary-election contest with some misgivings. He realized that he was up against the biggest battle of his political career.

Several times in the past attempts had been made to wrest the district leadership from him, but in all those cases his opponents had been so weak, and their campaigns so poorly organized, that he had been able to defeat them without much effort. The Honorable Sugden Lawrence, he had reason to believe, would prove a much more formidable foeman. The ex-judge possessed a personality which made him an opponent to be feared even by so powerful a boss as Samuel J. Coggswell. Therefore the latter had spoken with the utmost sincerity when he told Jake Hines that he would miss him. He feared that in order to win, much dirty work would have to be done; and Boss Coggswell disliked dirty work—when he had to do it himself. It would have been so much pleasanter to have the indefatigable Jake on hand to take care of the hiring of "guerrillas," the "fixing" of election inspectors, and various other details of a similarly sordid and disagreeable character which Jake had always taken care of so faithfully.

Perhaps it is needless to say that the enforced absence of his trusty helper did not increase the boss' good will toward the man who was directly responsible for that calamity. Coggswell promised himself grimly that if the primary election went his way Mr. Owen Sheridan's chances of holding down his job as post-office inspector wouldn't be worth a plugged nickel.

True, Sheridan was protected—to some extent, by the civil-service laws; but that fact did not worry Coggswell. He had his own little ways for overcoming such obstacles.

It was not only a desire for vengeance which actuated him; fear and self-preservation were also his motives. He considered it positively dangerous to have Sheridan remain in the detective branch of the postal service, for there were certain transactions past, present, and contemplated, with which he was closely identified, which would not bear the scrutiny of a post-office inspector.

He was afraid, however, to bring about the dismissal of the man before primary-election day; he knew that if he did so Judge Lawrence would not fail to make political capital out of the incident; so he decided to wait until the contest for the district leadership was over. In the meantime, for safety's sake, he contrived to have Sheridan transferred from the New York district. This he could bring about without laying himself open to the charge of persecution. A little wire pulling at Washington, and, without Boss Coggswell's name being mentioned in the matter at all, Owen received peremptory orders to report to the chief inspector of the San Francisco branch.

"I wouldn't mind the change at all," said Owen to Judge Lawrence. "It will be a nice honeymoon trip for us"—for the transfer order reached him on the very day of his marriage to Dallas—"but I hate the idea of being away from New York while you are waging your primary battle against that crook. I was in hopes that I would be able to repay a little of what you have done for me by helping you in your campaign."

"For shame!" exclaimed the ex-jurist good-humoredly. "Even if you were in New York, you couldn't possibly afford to take any part in the fight. Don't you know that employees of the United States postal service are forbidden to mix up in politics?"

He smiled ironically as he said the words, for, although things are somewhat different to-day, in those days it was an open secret that every member of the service, from the humblest letter carrier to the head of the department, was an active political worker.

"Besides," Judge Lawrence continued seriously, "I shall not need your help. There isn't any doubt in my mind that I am going to defeat that rascal. All the trickery and corrupt practices which his crooked brain can devise won't suffice to avert his downfall. You can go to San Francisco thoroughly assured that the days of Samuel J. Coggswell as a political boss are numbered."

This did not appear to be an idle boast. As primary day drew nearer, Coggswell grew more and more alarmed by the strength which his opponent displayed. Word reached him that the voters of the district were flocking by thousands to the ex-jurist's banner. Men who had never taken the trouble to vote at a primary election before were taking a keen interest in this fight. Judge Lawrence was conducting a whirlwind campaign, and his

forceful oratory had the district stirred as it had never been stirred before.

So worried was Boss Coggswell that he decided to take the stump himself—a step which he had never before found necessary in all the years he had been a political boss.

During the closing days of the campaign he followed his opponent around the district, speaking from carts and in halls, denying vehemently the judge's charge that he had been mixed up in the conspiracy for which his man—Jake Hines—was in prison stripes, and hotly denouncing the rival candidate's "mud-slinging" tactics as "un-American and ungentlemanly."

But, although he was an eloquent speaker, he was forced to realize that his oratory could not save the day. His audiences smiled skeptically when he protested that he had had nothing to do with the desperate attempt to railroad young Sheridan to jail. They smiled still more incredulously when he denied Judge Lawrence's charge that he had derived revenue from the sale of tickets for the various outings of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association.

The judge made it a point to go extensively into the details of those notorious outings. He quoted figures to show that at each outing the sale of tickets had brought in several thousand dollars more than the total expenses. He charged that this surplus had gone into the boss' coffers, and exposed the blackmailing methods by which Jake Hines and the other lieutenants had forced the reluctant civil-service employees and business men of the district to take tickets. It made excellent campaign material.

What worried Boss Coggswell most of all was the fear that he would not be able to carry out successfully on election day the corrupt practices which now constituted his only hope of winning. That he could not win by fair means he was already sadly convinced, but he hoped to be able to steal the election by the aid of the guerrilla bands of "repeaters," fraudulent election inspectors, and stuffed ballot boxes.

But a doubt had arisen within Coggswell's troubled mind whether, with a fighter like the Honorable Sugden Lawrence to contend with, it would be possible to "get away" with these violent measures. The judge had issued a warning from the stump that he intended to have a fair, honest primary, and that if any rough work were attempted, those participating would be prosecuted.

Moreover—most serious blow of all—Judge Lawrence had enough pull at police headquarters to bring about the transfer of the captain of the precinct—an officer kindly disposed toward Coggswell. The man who had been sent up to take his place was an officer who was noted for his impartiality at elections and his ability to quell disorder at the voting places.

Altogether, things looked very bad for the boss. But just when the outlook appeared darkest and he was about to give up hope, he suddenly saw an opportunity to crush the enemy by a single blow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRUSHING EVIDENCE.

The opportunity which came to Boss Coggswell was in the form of a letter. Bill Hillman brought it to him as he sat in his private office at the headquarters of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association. Hillman was one of his henchmen, who, during the enforced absence of Jake Hines, had been chosen by the boss to fill that unfortunate young man's place as his confidential man. He was not as able a worker as Jake, judged by the standard which had made the latter so useful to his chief, but he combined the qualities of shrewdness, audacity, and unscrupulousness to a greater degree than anybody else in the organization; therefore, Coggswell had picked him as the man best fitted to wear Jake's mantle.

"Here's something important, boss," Hillman exclaimed, bursting excitedly into his chief's presence and waving a pink envelope with an ungummed flap.

Coggswell took the envelope, and noted with interest that it was addressed to the Honorable Sugden Lawrence. It bore in the left-hand corner the imprint: "Hodginson & Lehman, Attorneys, 22 Wall Street."

He drew out the inclosure, and read eagerly the following typed communication:

"My Dear Judge: I beg to acknowledge receipt of your check for thirty thousand dollars, in full settlement of the claims of our client, Miss Marjorie Dorman. In consideration of this payment our client agrees to abandon her action against you for breach of promise of marriage, and to return all letters written to her by you. Formal agreement to this effect will be mailed to you under separate cover.

"May I take the liberty, my dear judge, of congratulating you upon the satisfactory outcome of this unpleasant case, and upon the rare good sense you have displayed in deciding to settle the matter out of court, thereby avoiding a lot of painful notoriety, which, no doubt, would have been most distressing to a man as prominent in public life as yourself? We need scarcely assure you, now, that there will be absolutely no publicity. Yours cordially,

Harvey Hodginson."

The last sentence of this letter afforded Boss Coggswell much amusement. "No publicity!" he chuckled. "Well, I don't know about that. I rather think that Mr. Harvey Hodginson is going to find himself mistaken on that point."

He turned to Bill Hillman. "This letter is indeed interesting," he remarked. "How did you get it, my boy? I hope you came by it honestly?"

Hillman's only response was a broad grin. He knew that the boss knew very well how the letter came into his possession. In spite of the narrow escape he had had once before, Coggswell, for several days past, had been up to his old trick of having Judge Lawrence's mail intercepted and carefully scrutinized before it was delivered to its addressee. He was so anxious to "get something on" his opponent that he considered the risk worth while.

Hillman grinned again as the boss folded the letter, replaced it in the envelope, and carefully gummed down the flap. It had been opened by holding it over a steaming kettle, and was necessary for Coggswell to resort to the mucilage bottle on his desk in order to close it again. He performed the task with a dexterity which showed that he was a master craftsman at that sort of thing, taking great care not to invite suspicion by applying too much mucilage.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, suddenly drawing back with affected astonishment after he had completely this opera-

tion. "There's a postage stamp on this envelope, Bill—an uncanceled stamp. Queer that I didn't notice it before. It looked as if this letter must have somehow dropped out of the mail. You'd better take it right away and hand it to a letter carrier. As good citizens, Bill, it is our duty to see that the United States mails are not delayed any longer than is absolutely necessary."

As Hillman hurried out to restore the letter to the unscrupulous carrier from whom he had "borrowed" it, Coggswell reached for his desk telephone, and called up a certain newspaper man with whom he was on very friendly terms.

"Can you come around to the club right away?" he inquired. "There's a chance for you to make twenty dollars and get a good story for your paper, besides."

Half an hour later he was explaining to the reporter what was required of him. The latter was to earn the twenty dollars by interviewing a firm of lawyers named Hodginson & Lehman, and a young woman named Miss Marjorie Dorman, if he could find her. He was to ask them about a breach-of-promise suit which the Honorable Sugden Lawrence had settled out of court by the payment of thirty thousand dollars.

"It is probable that you won't find either the lawyers or the young lady willing to talk," he remarked. "They don't wish any publicity. But a reporter of your experience ought to be able to wring some information out of either one or the other. Do the best you can, and let me know as soon as possible what you find out."

The reporter was not successful. At the law offices of Hodginson & Lehman he was told curtly that the firm never discussed its clients' affairs with representatives of the press. A search through city directories and telephone books failed to locate Miss Marjorie Dorman.

Boss Coggswell was disappointed, but not dismayed. "I scarcely expected that you'd be able to make them talk," he told his newspaper friend; "but I thought it was worth trying. Of course, the more details I could get about the case the better. However, I have enough information for my purpose. Come around to Colfax Hall to-night, and you'll see some fun. I'm going to address a big meeting there—the biggest of the whole campaign—and I'm going to hand a big jolt to my dear friend the judge. I don't imagine that he'll be as popular with the voters of this district after I get through with him. If you can't come yourself, you'd better see that your paper sends another man to cover the meeting. I'm going to notify all the other papers. I want every sheet in town to print my speech."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BOOMERANG.

At nine o'clock that evening Coggswell proceeded to hand his opponent the big jolt, as planned. Standing on the platform at Colfax Hall, which was filled with some two thousand voters of the district, he began earnestly:

"My friends, as you all know, since the start of this contest I have deplored personal attacks. I have raised my voice in protest against the outrageous mud slinging indulged in by my opponent and his misguided friends. But inasmuch as they have persisted in their shameful abuse of a man who for seventeen years has worked night and day to serve the people of this district, I feel justified in showing you that we can do a little mud slinging, too. I am going to handle this Mr. Justice Lawrence without gloves. I am going to show him to you in his true colors."

Boss Coggswell raised his clenched fist above his head. "A rascal who deceives his fellow men is bad enough," he yelled, "but I cannot find words, my friends, to express my contempt for a scoundrel who would dupe a woman—an innocent, trusting young girl. And that's the kind of a man the Honorable Sugden Lawrence is."

He was interrupted at this point by a storm of groans and hisses, and one man with a brazen voice shouted: "That's a lie!"

"It's the truth!" roared Boss Coggswell, shaking his fist frenziedly in the direction of this disturber. "It's the truth, my friends, and I can prove it. This rascal Lawrence has just paid the sum of thirty thousand dollars to a young woman whom he promised to marry and then shamelessly jilted. He paid her the money, not out of a sense of shame, my friends, or a sense of justice, but because she had started a suit for breach of promise against him, and he was afraid of the scandal. He was afraid of being shown up to his fellow men in his true colors, so he paid her thirty thousand dollars hush money to call off the suit. The name of this young woman is Miss Marjorie Dorman. I challenge the *Honorable* Sugden Lawrence to deny these facts." The speaker placed withering emphasis upon the word honorable. "I challenge him to deny that he paid that money to prevent the breach-of-promise suit from going to court."

Amid the excitement which followed this sensational charge, a young man strode down the center aisle toward the platform. Boss Coggswell saw him coming, and stared at him in astonishment. He scarcely could believe that his eyes were not playing him a trick.

The young man, a grim smile on his face, mounted the three stairs leading to the platform, and stood in the background, waiting patiently until Boss Coggswell was through with his speech. He did not have long to wait. Although the speaker had intended to say much more, his thoughts were so upset by the arrival of this visitor that he cut short his remarks.

As he stepped to the rear of the platform, he was confronted by the newcomer.

"Well, if it isn't my young friend, Inspector Sheridan!" he exclaimed, with affected heartiness. "What are you doing here, my boy? I thought you were in San Francisco. I heard that you had been transferred there."

"Evidently your informant hasn't kept you well posted," Owen replied dryly. "I was ordered there, but I was called back. You see, Mr. Coggswell, you are not the only man who has a pull at Washington. My friend Judge Lawrence has a friend there who is quite influential in post-office affairs. He lives at the White House. When he heard that the judge needed me here, he was kind enough to countermand that transfer order."

"So the judge needed you here, did he?" remarked the boss uneasily. "Might I ask what for?"

"Certainly. I have no objection to telling you that—now. Judge Lawrence had a suspicion that his mail was being tampered with. He thought that I might be able to find out who was responsible for the outrage."

"And have you found out?" inquired Coggswell, his ears beginning to wiggle.

"I have," Inspector Sheridan answered. "That is why I am here now. I have come to place you under arrest,

Mr. Coggswell. I wish I could say that it is an unpleasant duty, but I must be truthful. As a good citizen, I have been looking forward to this moment for some time."

Their voices were sufficiently loud to carry to all parts of the hall, and a hush had fallen upon the audience. Every man was listening intently.

Boss Coggswell frowned. "Young man, you had better be careful. I warn you that if you go ahead with this foolishness the consequences will be most disastrous to you. I presume this is a piece of spite work on the part of my opponent. No doubt he has heard that I've got the goods on him regarding that breach-of-promise case, and he thinks he'll be able to square himself with the voters of this district by making this outrageous move."

"Are you quite sure that you have the goods on Judge Lawrence regarding that breach-of-promise case?" asked Sheridan, with a quizzical smile. "Perhaps you are mistaken, Coggswell. Perhaps the judge is not quite the rascal you have painted him. It is true that he is acquainted with a young person named Marjorie Dorman. It is also true that he is very fond of her. But it is not true that he has ever asked her to marry him. As a matter of fact, she is not quite old enough to consider a proposal of that sort. She is only six years old. She is the judge's little niece."

Boss Coggswell looked very uneasy. His face had turned pale. His ears were wiggling furiously.

"Then what was the idea?" he inquired hoarsely.

"The idea was to set a little trap for you," Owen explained. "As I said before, the judge has had cause to suspect for some time that his mail was being tampered with—that somebody was steaming open the envelopes and reading their contents before they were delivered to him. He put the matter in my hands, and we decided to make a little test to ascertain whether his suspicions were correct. We fixed up a decoy letter. It told of an imaginary check for thirty thousand dollars which the judge paid to settle an imaginary breach-of-promise suit. It was sent to the judge through the mails, and was intercepted in the usual way by you, Coggswell——"

"That's a lie!" Coggswell interrupted furiously. "I never saw your confounded letter. I——"

"It is the truth," Inspector Sheridan returned quietly. "The speech you have just made on this platform is enough to convict you. But, in addition to that, I have arrested the carrier who handed the letter to your man, Bill Hillman, and I have a complete confession from him. We have such a good case, Boss Coggswell, that we are fully confident of the result. Not only are you going to lose the leadership of this district, but you are going away for a few years to keep your friend and accomplice, Jake Hines, company in prison."

And, although he was not the seventh son of a seventh son, Post-office Inspector Owen Sheridan proved to be a true prophet.

THE END.

"SOLD."

As the man went across the street, several persons saw it, and turned to laugh at him. The second boy, who was waiting across the street, ran up to the man and said:

"Mister, there's a card hooked to your coat behind. Let me take it off."

"Goodness me!" said the man. "How did that get there?"

"One o' them ragamuffins put it on, I s'pose."

"Confound them! Well, here's a dime for you."

Two minutes later the good little boy hung it on a fat man, and his partner on the other side collected another dime. He had to ask for it, but he got it. A man would be a brute to refuse a dime to a poor boy who had done him such a service.

A SMART TOAD.

Professor Botkins tells of a remarkable instance of intelligence exhibited by a garden toad. He was watching the efforts of his pet toad to capture a very large worm. The toad had been sitting still, and giving no sign that it saw anything. The worm gave a little wriggle as it began to come out of the ground, when, quick as a flash the toad made a leap, and seized the end of the worm in its mouth.

Then began a tug of war. Every time that the toad gave a pull, the worm drew back. But the toad was not to be discouraged. It jerked and jerked until it fairly stood on its hind legs. Still it could not dislodge the worm.

He glanced down again, and saw the toad twisting its legs about until the worm was wrapped twice around it, then the toad gave a hop, and out came the worm.

IT WAS FOUND.

An Irish clergyman, riding from his home to chapel one morning had the misfortune to lose a new cloak, which he carried attached to his saddle.

Before commencing his discourse, he thought well to advertise the loss of the garment and to enlist the services of the congregation in its recovery.

"Dearly beloved," he began, "I have met with a great loss this morning. I have lost my fine new cloak. If any of you find it, I hope you will be so good as to bring it home to me."

"It's found, yer riverence," cried a voice from the bottom of the chapel.

"God bless you, my child!" exclaimed the pastor, with unction.

"It's found, sir," continued the voice; "for I kem that road this mornin', an' it wasn't on it."

TOO SHARP BY A THIRD.

Harry had just begun to go to school, and was very proud of what he had learned.

One day he thought he would show his father how much he knew, and asked him at dinner:

"Papa, how many chickens are there on that dish?"

"Two, my boy," said papa. "I thought you knew how to count."

"You're wrong," said Harry; "there are three. That's one, that's two, and two and one make three."

"Very well," said his father; "your mother may have one for her dinner, I'll take the other, and you can have the third."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Gets Another Prison Term.

Charles F. Kline, who, at the age of fifty-five, has spent thirty-three years of his life in prison, and who pleaded guilty in Federal court in Columbus Ohio, to charges that he had counterfeited silver dollars, was sentenced by Judge Sater to four and one-half years in the Moundsville, W. Va., Penitentiary. Kline was arrested several months ago in a log cabin near West Jefferson, Ohio.

Woman, Seventy-four, Cutting New Teeth.

Mrs. H. Vincent, of Medford, Ore., seventy-four years old, and a pioneer of the Rogue River Valley, is cutting a new set of teeth, nine uppers and eight lowers. The unusual condition has necesitated the casting aside of false teeth.

Last summer Mrs. Vincent suffered from a paralytic stroke in the left arm, and the nervous shock is supposed to be responsible for the sudden reversal in Nature's routine. Mrs. Vincent is suffering but slight inconvenience from her second "teething."

Saved by Strip of Canvas.

Falling forty feet and not being injured was the unique experience of Worley Hassler, an employee of the Spring Grove Stone and Lime Co., of Spring Grove., Pa. A thin strip of canvas put up to protect the firemen from the sun saved his life.

Hassler was working on the top of a kiln when he was overcome by gaseous fumes, falling over the edge. Workmen who saw him hurtling through the air were surprised when he alighted on the canvas covering, bounded into the air again, and landed safely on the ground, unhurt.

Snake's Queer Predicament.

When James Moriarity, of Lead Hill, Ark., heard a rustling of the bushes in a fence corner near his barn, he pushed aside the shrubbery and saw a large blacksnake apparently making a furious effort to crawl through a narrow crack between two rails of the fence. When the snake saw Moriarity, the reptile made an effort to withdraw but could not do so.

Moriarity investigated the predicament of the snake and saw that it had found a nest of eggs, part of which were on one side of the fence and part on the other side. The snake had swallowed an egg on the "near" side of the fence and then had poked its head through the crack and swallowed another egg. With two eggs in its throat, one on each side of the crack, the snake was a prisoner. Moriarity killed the snake but did not rescue the eggs.

Terrapin Back After Twenty-five Yeats.

This is the story of how a Georgia terrapin came back after twenty-five years. It is vouched for by a number of well-known citizens.

One day back in the year 1890, Harry Lee Jarvis and W. H. Prater were strolling over the latter's plantation near Varnell Station, above Atlanta, when they encountered a highland tortoise or what is commonly known as a terrapin, and pronounced "tarrypin" by the portions of the population who know and love him best.

Prater did what quite a number of now celebrated men have done before—he carved his initials and the year on the unresisting terrapin's lid, and let him go. And last week the terrapin did what quite a number of now celebrated tortoises have done before—it came back.

Prater was directing the clearing of a ditch, when one of the workmen picked up a terrapin. On its shell were plainly carved the initials W. H. P. and date 1890, partly grown over by a new growth of shell, but still perfectly distinct. Mr. Prater says the terrapin didn't seem to have grown much, but looked hale and hearty as when they first met.

Makes Tumblers Out of Ice.

Instead of icing drinks, why not put them in tumblers made of ice? It looks as if this would soon be possible in every home, for the United States patent office has issued a patent to Hendrik Douwe Pieter Huizer, of The Hague, Netherlands, for an apparatus for making tumblers of ice. Besides cooling the contents, such tumblers will have the hygienic advantage of never being used more than once. The inventor suggests insulating his ice tumblers in paper or celluloid cases in order to make them last at least as long as the drink.

Interesting New Inventions.

A new piano for traveling musicians weighs but one hundred and twenty pounds and can be packed and shipped like a trunk.

A rat trap has been patented that first catches a rodent, then electrocutes it, and finally drops the body into a receptacle out of sight of others.

A German speedometer for automobiles has an illuminated dial which makes several color changes as the speed of the car to which it is attached increases.

For the blind there has been invented a watch with the hours marked by raised dots and dashes that can be read by the sense of touch.

A new traveling bag locks automatically when it is lifted by the handle.

A California inventor has patented a chair for amusement places that can be opened for use only when a coin is dropped into a slot.

A saddle has been patented by a New Jersey inventor which includes leather flaps to cover the buckles, which frequently wear out riders' clothing.

Champion Quiltmaker—A Man—Defies Rivals.

W. W. Yale, of Ouaquaga, N. Y., champion patchwork-quilt piecer of the State, defended his title by completing his twentieth quilt for the year.

Encouraged by his tremendous accomplishment for the fiscal year, Mr. Yale, who fears no thimbled demon in America, has issued a challenge to every hemstitching, quilt-making, embroidery lover in the nation for the coming year. He says openly that he will complete twenty-five quilts or know the reason why, and those who know Mr. Yale declare that this is strong language for him.

Already the champion has made arrangements for the construction of a quilt, the central decoration of which is to be the Ouaquaga town hall. Facetious persons who are familiar with the Ouaquaga town hall, figure that the reproduction in needlework may be life size, which would make the quilt ample to cover a cot or for use as a doily.

A great number of punsters make remarks about Mr. Yale and his life work, but he never gives them a thought, as is evidenced by the fact that he has heard their tirades frequently without so much as dropping a stitch. Frequently he has caused gasps of delight by his colorings, which he takes from the flower beds in the front yard of his home. The colorings are those of the cannas, bleeding hearts, hollyhocks, sunflowers, salvias, dahlias, and marigolds.

Mr. Yale dreads to have women advise him regarding his work, for they frequently annoy him by their overbearing attitude in matters which he, as champion, should be consulted about as the last authority. He gets terribly angry sometimes, but as yet has never struck any one.

Smallest Electric Motor.

The smallest electric motor in the world, just high enough to reach up under the chin of the head of Lincoln on a one-cent piece, has been built by H. F. Keeler, a student in the Highland Park College of Engineering at Des Moines, Iowa.

The armature is less than one-fourth of an inch in diameter, and the wire is of the size of number one-hundred thread. A jeweler's microscope must be used to see the different parts, and the whole thing weighs only twenty grains, or as much as a third of a teaspoonful of water. When coupled with small dry batteries, it runs at very high velocity and makes a noise like a fly on a windowpane.

Says Eyes Tell Tales to Most Shrewd Observers.

Are your eyes predominantly blue or gray, or brown or black?

According to some elaborate statistical researches, if they are blue or gray you are of an intellectual rather than emotional nature. If brown or black, the emotional nature. If brown or black, the emotional in you exceeds the intellectual, and you need to be specially on your guard to keep your passions in check.

If, again, your eye is not strongly colorful; if it is prominent, with the pupil small and seldom dilating to any extent, and with the glance fixed, the modern physiognomist warns you to cultivate generosity of heart and breadth and tolerance of mind. For these are the qualities which this eye formation indicates that you lack.

So, too, there is a danger signal for you if you find a puffiness below your eyes, with the rim of the lower lid falling away from the eye, showing the red, while the upper lid droops. These signs usually point to one of two things, we are told.

Either you are wasting your energies in some form of dissipation or your internal organs, particularly your kidneys, are not functioning as they should. You yourself know best to which of these evils—dissipation or ill health—the puffiness is due.

Does your glance meet that of other people squarely and fearlessly? Or do you have a tendency to shift your eyes and look away when talking with others?

In the latter event, says the physiognomist, you may be sure something is wrong with you. You are perhaps suffering from some slight nervous weakness. Or, what is more likely, you have thoughts in your mind which are not altogether to your credit. The shifting or drooping of your gaze is then based on a subconscious fear that your eyes will betray what is passing through your mind.

Finally, note the position of your eyes. Mistrust yourself especially if you find your eyes "slanting upward from the nose under brows also slanting upward with fullness in the upper lid which overhangs the eye and hides the rim of the lid, the eyeball thrown upward."

"This," says the physiognomist Foshbroke, and the writer has verified his observation, "is the eye of craft and treachery, indicating the nature of the tiger and the fox, whose eye it resembles."

A person with such an eye cannot too soon begin a course of moral self-education to straighten out the kinks in his nature.

This can always be done. Eye indications do not mean that your nature is fixed and unalterable in accordance with the signs shown by the eyes. On the contrary, the value of such signs is that they specify precisely in what respects reforms are most desirable.

Fierce Man-eating Lion Dines on Dog.

Julia, the ferocious "snarling lioness," billed as one of the most terrifying features of the Firemen's Carnival in Mount Vernon, N. Y., escaped from her cage the other night when she sneezed and blew out two of the many half-inch bars forming the front of her den.

Fortunately it was three o'clock in the morning, at which times nothing is out in Mount Vernon but the street lamps and the downtown dogs. Of these latter Julia partook sparingly, as will be seen.

When Julia was brought here in connection with the effort to raise funds for Hose Truck No. 2, her fierce, untamed conduct, coupled with the fact that she was said to have two teeth, made the firemen fearful for the safety of their friends, who, after paying their admission, foolishly insisted upon feeding peanuts and stick caramels to the evil-eyed man-eater. The situation became so desperate that Julia growled every time she woke up—about twice a day.

One night, when her trainers left her, she was over in one corner of the cage, yawning. As she had yawned every couple of minutes since she was a cub, nothing was thought of it. They took their dinner pails and went home, confident that they had trained her enough for one day.

Soon after two o'clock, one of the trainers, unable to sleep because of a presentiment that something was wrong with the Firemen's Carnival, walked down to the wild-animal cage and looked in. Julia was gone! The keeper, fully convinced of this alarming fact, took his life in his hands and immediately jumped into the cage. Then he called for a bit of help at the top of his lungs.

The police force, who had been sleeping fitfully, responded as soon as he could get his helmet and shield on. When he reached the Firemen's Carnival, the awful situation was finally made clear to him, and the two of

them, working in shifts, soon aroused the greater part of the town.

Julia was found cowering in the doorway of an apartment house. It was high time for her to cower, for it was found that in her jaunt she had eaten one of Alphonse Camera's dogs, fell over an Airedale, which died of fright, and chased a black cat to its death in a heavy door at the apartment house which was swinging at an unfortunate moment.

While one of the trainers threatened Julia with a revolver, another got a box, and they shooed her into it.

The Firemen's Carnival management say that the whole thing is a good advertisement for every one concerned—except possibly Julia's trainer and the firm that made the cage.

Lawyer Seems to Have Amazing Dual Nature.

The strange case of Charles Williams, of Whitewater, Wis., is likely to become a cause for celebration among medical men, for it is one of the clearest cases of dual identity on record. The two personalities are Charles Williams, lawyer, justice, man of culture and personality, and the same man as a farm laborer.

The doctors, bringing Williams back from Merriville, Ind., where he was found after he had been missing for three days, are working to transform him once again to his true identity, that of the Whitewater court commissioner.

Mr. Williams was, while in college, a famous baseball pitcher, but in 1893, just after his graduation from the State University, disappeared while en route to Chicago to begin his life work as a lawyer. It was seven years before he was found, and he was then a farm laborer near Merriville, Ind.

He came back to Whitewater, and all went well for a dozen years. Last week Mr. Williams began to complain of headaches, and on Tuesday started for Janesville on some legal business. He disappeared exactly as he had twenty years ago. And the strange display of his dual personality was that he immediately went to Merriville, Ind., and tried to get work at the same farm where he was found after his first disappearance.

It took him three days to reach there, and as soon as he arrived, word was sent back to his home here, and relatives went after him. The doctors hope to restore his mind to the regular legal channels so strangely abandoned for the "call of the farm."

War Hits Circus Men; Few Tent Shows on Road.

The circus has received two hard blows this year, and daddy, uncle, and auntie may not have many opportunities to take Johnny under the canvas to see acrobats, tigers, and such.

War was the first setback circus people experienced. Then came the foot-and-mouth disease among live stock. Each at first had an indirect result, but now the loss of foreign acrobats, animal trainers, and wild animals, together with the United States Bureau of Animal Industry prescribing narrow zones in which a circus can move for fear of carrying or contracting the foot-and-mouth disease, have caused lots of trouble for the three-ring showmen.

As evidence of this condition, A. L. Wilson, manager of a big tent and awning company of Kansas City, Mo., says that the demand for circus and concession tents has practically been suspended, and he does not expect it to resume until the European War is ended and the United States government officials pronounce the country free of the foot-and-mouth disease.

Persistent Wooer Mauled.

That the course of John Jestor's true love for Miss May Sutton, of New York, has been an intolerable rocky path was indicated when his cries for assistance called several policemen into the vestibule of Miss Sutton's home. They barely dodged a butcher knife, of which the young woman had disarmed her persistent suitor and had hurled it into the street.

The policemen found Miss Sutton kicking Jestor about the vestibule, cuffing his ears soundly and occasionally landing a doubled little fist on his eyes, while he bellowed for aid.

Miss Sutton said that Jestor had declared that as she would not be his wife, he would end both their lives.

Jestor, who is forty-five years old, cut both his wrists with a razor three months ago, according to the police, because Miss Sutton had told him to stay away from her. He was locked up on a charge of attempted felonious assault.

Boy Bandit Comes to Grief.

After he had held up and robbed Miss Martha Zelf, eighteen years old, assistant cashier of the People's State Bank at Dodson, a suburb of Kansas City, Mo., and forced her to give him three hundred and four dollars of the bank's money, a man giving his name as Luther Afton, nineteen years old, of Merrick, Okla., was captured, and an hour later pleaded guilty in the criminal court and was sentenced to twenty years in the penitentiary.

The girl was alone in the bank when the young man entered. He pointed a revolver at her and ordered her to hand him the money in the teller's cage. At first Miss Zelf laughed at him, and then handed him a double handful of silver dollars. These he refused. The girl parleyed with him a moment and finally complied with his demand for currency.

As the robber reached the door, the girl screamed for help. Immediately a number of citizens gathered and pursued the robber, catching him in a chicken yard.

Renders Objects Invisible.

Michael Comerford, of St. Johns, Newfoundland, claims to have discovered a process of developing a film which, when placed in front of any object, no matter of what character or size, absorbs the color and exact form of the said object and presents a surrounding which hides from view any object behind without the object being visible. In other words, the invention is all that is claimed for it, and it makes it possible for a man or a body of men to disappear in a twinkling. Mr. Comerford has given several demonstrations of the invention to his friends, who say that it will revolutionize modern warfare.

Discovers Funniest Joke.

The "funniest joke" has been rediscovered. Samuel Ramsey, a carpenter of New Orleans, La., knows it, though a waiting world is yet to hear it. Just as soon as Sam gets entirely free from the ether of the Charity Hospital, he says he's going to tell it.

Sam laughed so heartily at the joke that there came a click to his jaw, and, to his dismay, he was unable to close

his mouth. In his predicament he was removed from his home to the hospital, where surgeons endeavored to set the jawbones. A reporter interviewed Sam on his little cot, and Sam wrote this on a slip of paper:

"I can't tell it to you now—it's too funny, but if you wait until I get out of here, I'll try to tell it."

Patient is a Wireless "Nut."

A patient in the State asylum, in Pueblo, Col., is suffering from an unusual form of insanity. He believes that the wireless stations throughout the world are preying on him and sapping his strength.

He wants to form a union for the purpose of elaborately attempting to abolish aërial communication throughout the world.

So far as known this is the first time this peculiar hallucination has come to notice.

Favors Pardon for Youtsey.

The Reverend Andrew Johnson, nominated for governor of Kentucky on the Prohibition platform, announced that his first official act, if elected, would be to pardon Henry E. Youtsey, who is serving a life sentence for the assassination of William Goebel in 1899, while Goebel was contesting W. S. Taylor's gubernatorial seat.

This announcement will carry more weight than is apparent on the surface, since the Democratic party has been divided two or three times over efforts to pardon Youtsey, and petitions have been put in circulation, principally by women, in aid of such effort.

Youtsey is only one out of more than forty men arrested for complicity in the Goebel murder. Caleb Powers and James Howard, who were alleged to be most concerned, were pardoned by Governor Wilson, Republican, several years ago. As Youtsey confessed to his part in the crime, Democrats contend he should be pardoned.

Mr. Johnson offers to withdraw from the race if the Republican or Democratic party puts a State-wide prohibition plank in its platform.

Horse Falls in Hidden Well.

Chester Tupper, of Paternos, Wash., was riding through the orchard of C. J. Stiner in pursuit of some cattle, when his horse broke through a hidden well, which had been dug to a depth of sixty feet and then covered with loose boards. Tupper threw himself clear of the saddle and saved himself. The horse went down, but somehow managed to keep his head above the water. A tripod was rigged with pulley and snatch block. A team was hitched to this and the horse was brought safely to the surface.

How White Woman Came Near Being an Indian.

If Mrs. Josephine Carroll, of South Omaha, Neb., had become a little Indian papoose as she was slated to have been, one of Omaha's most enthusiastic charity workers and night-school instructors would be missing to-day.

Mrs. Carroll was once slated to be a papoose. A squaw so wished her when her parents were not looking. The squaw kidnaped the child a little more than half a century ago, when Omaha was a buffalo pasture.

There was a rescue. But it never got into the papers. There were no papers to print thrilling adventures that occurred around the Missouri River bluffs in those days. The mother, Mrs. John Godola, walked right out of the house, stopped the squaw, and took the child away from her. If it were to-day, the movies would have a thriller on the screen about it. But that was before Edison or any one else had thought of making pictures walk and talk; also, those were the days when experience with the Indians were many and grotesque. A mere kidnaping did not attract much attention.

Mrs. Carroll's mother lived at what is now Thirteenth and Farnam Streets. At that time it was neither Thirteenth nor Farnam. It was just a place in the hills, prairie and timber. The present Mrs. Carroll was about three years of age. Her mother employed a young Indian squaw as a domestic. All was fine, but the domestic didn't like to work. She liked to play with the baby, however. The baby took a great liking to the brown maid.

One day the brown maid and the baby's mother fell out. Straightway the servant was dismissed. Being fired was a somewhat novel experience to this brown maiden. She knew principally that she was expected to leave the premises, and that her pay, whatever that may have been, was to stop.

When the childish prattle was no longer heard, the mother rushed out just in time to see the squaw disappearing over the hill with the child. There was a hotly contested half-mile race. It was a race of the white and the red. White won, and the precious child was brought back.

Millionaire is Generous.

Henry Pfeiffer, of Philadelphia, son of one of Cedar Falls' earliest pioneers, now head of the big chemical company of Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Chicago, and a multimillionaire, concluded a two weeks' visit with his brothers and sisters here by presenting each of them with a check for ten thousand dollars and an automobile. His benefactions in this way totaled nearly one hundred thousand dollars.

The beneficiaries are H. J. Pfeiffer, L. Pfeiffer, Mrs. D. C. Merner, Mrs. W. F. Noble, brothers and sisters, and ex-Mayor W. H. Merner, D. C. Merner, and S. S. Merner, brothers-in-law. Besides this, the children of all these people were likewise remembered handsomely.

Twin Children Made Taller.

Phaon and Uriah Schaeffer, four-year-old twins from Pinegrove, will be returned to their home from the Miners' Hospital, in Pottsville, Pa., fully an inch and a half taller than when they were admitted three weeks ago.

The twins were so bowlegged as to be deformed, and Doctor J. C. Biddle, to straighten out their limbs, put them in a plaster cast. The result has not only been to straighten out the legs but to make the boys much taller, while their walk is so different that they could hardly be recognized by relatives.

Little Ship Sails to Find Arctic Explorer.

Within a month the little schooner *George B. Cluett* will be bucking ice in the arctic waters, on her way to Etah, Greenland. The *Cluett* sailed from New York recently for Nova Scotia and Labrador, where she will put off part of her cargo for the coast hospitals of the Grenfell Association. Then she will sail on to search for Donald B. MacMillan and his party.

MacMillan set out from New York just two years

ago to explore Crocker Land, the existence of which Rear Admiral Peary believed he had discovered. According to a message which MacMillan managed to get back some time ago, there is no such land. The American Museum of Natural History, one of the chief backers of the expedition, is sending the schooner *Cluett* to find MacMillan.

At one of the hospital stations where the schooner will stop, Doctor E. O. Hovey, of the museum, will be taken aboard. Captain H. C. Pickels, of the *Cluett*, hopes to find MacMillan and his comrades waiting at Etah, the expedition's base, and to get out before the winter ice closes in on the schooner. In that case he will be back in November. But the schooner carries provisions to last two years.

If MacMillan has to be awaited for or search made for him, the long winter will make either task easy. The ship will then find herself encompassed with leagues of ice. Eskimo huts will spring up around her like mushrooms, and in the long arctic night it would be difficult to identify the little *Cluett* with the picture of her taken at New York the other day.

But a closer acquaintance with Captain Pickels and the *Cluett* helps one's imagination to bridge the gap. Ever since she was built, four years ago, for the Grenfell mission service on the Labrador coast, Pickels has commanded her. She was designed for work in Northern waters. As the bronze plate in the captain's cabin sets forth, she was presented to Doctor Wilfred Grenfell in July, 1911, by George B. Cluett. That she went to sea with purposes other than those of the ordinary trading schooner, the plate makes plain in these few words: "The Sea is His and He Made It." The inscription in the brass band which binds the wheel, "Jesus saith I will make you fishers of men," serves to distinguish her from the run of fishing craft which infest the Labrador waters. But for these symbols of a higher vocation she is just like them, save that she is much more stanch.

Although the proved nimbleness of the *Cluett* leads her charterers to hope that she may slip in and out with the rescued MacMillan party in time to get back to New York in November, the way food supplies have been poured into her show that no chances are to be taken in a locality where, as the captain remarked, "ye can't fetch stuff from a grocery 'round the corner.'" He shed light upon what for a dozen men might be considered a two years' food supply. Some two thousand pounds of beef, nearly half of it canned and the rest pickled in brine, and an almost equal quantity of mutton and pork, formed the backbone of the stores. Beans and potatoes and barrel on barrel of pilot bread set off this impressive meat supply, which winter hunting is to vary with fresh steaks and roasts.

Several hundred pounds of coffee and a hundred of tea, onions, and many gallons of lime juice to ward off scurvy, were important items; strangely enough, not a particle of chocolate or coco. A comment upon the rather small supply of milk—condensed, of course—as compared with, for one thing, three hundred pounds of rolled oats, drew from the hardy captain the explanation that crews in the North preferred molasses with their oatmeal, and of molasses he had nearly a hundred gallons.

When the schooner starts on the last leg of the journey north, with decks piled high with barrels of kerosense—the *Cluett* is to be stocked with nearly five thousand gallons of kerosene and nine hundred gallons of gasoline for her engines—the only persons aboard beside the crew of eight hardy Nova Scotians, will be the representative of the Natural History Museum. Captain Pickels' Newfoundland dog, "Chum," completes the list.

"Belled" Buzzard Appears.

When working on the Charles Dufour farm, two miles north of Vevay, Ind., Charles Hollcraft and son were surprised to hear a bell ringing in the top of a high tree. On investigation they discovered a buzzard with a sheep's bell strapped around one of its wings in such a manner that at each flap of the wings the bell tinkled. Seven years ago a "belled buzzard" was seen in various parts of Switzerland County at frequent intervals, but finally disappeared.

Woman Operates Zinc Mine.

One of the most active prospectors and mine operators in the extensive zinc-mining district of southwest Missouri is a woman, Mrs. Sarah Matlock. There is much activity in the Wentworth district, where her interests are located, and she is carrying on operations on a big scale. One of her many mining properties comprises one hundred and sixty acres. The biggest mine in that district is owned by her. Much of her land is subleased.

Indian Given State Office.

Oliver la Mere, of the town of Winnebago, Neb., is the first Indian to hold an appointment under the Nebraska State government. He has been appointed dairy inspector by Food Commissioner C. E. Harman, a department of which Governor Morehead is the chief.

Mr. la Mere is not an expert dairyman, but is a farmer, and has had considerable experience with dairy cattle and dairy products.

He is thirty-six years of age and has a wife and seven children. He attended the Indian school at Genoa, Neb., three years and attended school at Carlisle, Pa., in the year 1902. While he was a student there during that year he played center on the famous Indian football team. He then weighed two hundred and five pounds. He has written some newspaper articles on Indian clan organizations and Indian burial customs, and has coöperated with the government in anthropological research.

Lightning-rod Dispute is Officially Settled.

A few days ago a lightning-rod salesman near Bloomington, Ill., was struck by lightning and seriously injured. Notwithstanding the fact that the unfortunate salesman could not be expected to have his person and rig fitted out with a system of his alleged lightning catchers, extending far above his head and continually plowing into the roadway, as he made his tours of the country, still, the incident again revived the oft-discussed question as to the efficacy of the wares that constituted his stock in trade—the great American lightning rod—the mysterious economic discovery that has caused thousands of American farmers the loss of so much sleep and so many dollars in coin of the realm.

Ever since Ben Franklin designed the lightning rod as a means of protecting structures from lightning stroke, there has been periodically raised the question of the efficiency of these rods as a means of warding off the

bolts from the heavens. Men of eminence in the electrical world have been found arrayed on both sides of the question, and in order to arrive at some well-founded conclusion, the subject was taken up by the weather department.

The investigation was conducted by Professor J. Warren Smith, who addressed an open letter to the mutual fire-insurance companies throughout the country, especially those in the rural districts, asking for any information which these organizations might have which might throw some light on the subject. The value of the rods was undoubtedly attested to in the answers, and Benjamin Franklin has received full vindication.

In two recent years two hundred mutual companies doing a business of fully $300,000,000 had 1,845 buildings struck by lightning. Of this number only sixty-seven were equipped with lightning rods. So far as could be learned, about thirty-one per cent of the buildings insured by these companies were rodded; hence, if the rods had furnished no protection, the number of rodded buildings struck should have been five hundred and seventy-two instead of sixty-seven.

Thus the efficiency of the rods in actually preventing lightning strokes appears to have been about ninety per cent. It may be fairly assumed that a large part of the damage done to the rodded buildings occurred in cases where the rods were improperly installed or in poor condition.

Five companies, with over 18,000 buildings insured, of which more than fifty per cent were rodded, reported that they had never had a building burned or even materially damaged by lightning that was equipped with a lightning rod; their records covering periods ranging from thirteen to twenty-five years.

Another important fact brought out by Professor Smith's figures is that when a rodded building is struck by lightning and damaged but not burned down, the average damage is much less than in an unrodded building, viz., ten dollars in the former and twenty-two hundred dollars in the latter.

Boy Attempts to Fly; Falls.

John Mitchell, aged fourteen, living in the Mount Vernon Road below Evanville, Ind., attempted to rival the birds, and came to grief, with a broken arm. Mitchell made a girder and wings after a pattern in a boy's book which he bought at a local store.

He attempted to glide from the loft of the stable to the ground. The girders were not strong and the wings collapsed. Mitchell fell to the ground and his left arm was broken near the elbow and he suffered slight internal injuries.

Sharpening Stones; Their Various Uses.

Not many people realize that there is a special sort of whetstone for nearly every purpose. The proper sharpening stones for each different use are exhibited in the National Museum at Washington, D. C., and there are hundreds of them.

The hard, white, compact sandstones found near Hot Springs, Ark., are among the best whetstones known, equaling, if not surpassing, the Turkey stone, which for years has been considered one of the best.

The hard, flintlike stone should be used only to sharpen instruments made of the very best steel, requiring very keen edges and points such as those used by surgeons, dentists, and jewelers. Other grades, although composed of the same ingredients, are more porous, the sand grains are not as close together, and a rougher edge is given to the sharpened tool. Because of their more porous nature, these stones cut faster, proving suitable for the finer-edged tools and for honing razors.

Indiana and Ohio supply a whetstone made from a sandstone of a coarser grain than the novaculite of Arkansas, but nevertheless quite uniform. It may be used with either oil or water, and is useful for sharpening household cutlery or ordinary carpenters' tools. But since it is easily cut and grooved by hard steel, it is not suitable for the fine instruments of dentists and surgeons.

Scythe stones and mowing-machine stones are practically all made from mica schist rocks found in New Hampshire and Vermont. These rocks are composed of very thin sheets of mica and quartz crystals. The grit of the schist is not as sharp as that of the sandstone, because it contains foreign material other than silica, which prevents the quartz grains from abrading freely.

Mica-schist stones wear down quickly from constant use—an advantage rather than a disadvantage, for, as they wear down, more of the hard silica grains are exposed to do the sharpening. Neither oil nor water is needed to keep the pores of the stone open, as with other whetstone rocks. Scythes require stones with these qualities.

Stove Trouble is Solved.

For some time it has been impossible for the family of James Rich, of Fidelity, to use the stove in the summer kitchen, because the flue had become choked in some manner. The other day Mrs. Rich noticed a cat sitting on the stove and looking steadfastly at the stovepipe. At the same time Mrs. Rich's attention was attracted by a tap-tap-tapping sound. Although the woman is not a spiritualist, she answered the three taps by rapping on the stove with a fork handle. The taps responded from the stovepipe.

She called her husband and he too listened to the mysterious rappings. Finally they decided to take down the pipe and investigate. They did so, and what should suddenly emerge from the pipe but a red-headed woodpecker much soiled from his adventure in the pipe's sooty retreat.

The bird immediately took wing and flew away, pursued by other birds that seemed to mistake him for some new species. Mr. Rich then lighted a fire in the stove, and the flue has been drawing excellently ever since.

Girls Hang to Ties for Life.

Hanging from their hands from a high trestle of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, near Yarklyn, Del., residents of Mount Cuba escaped death when an express train overtook them.

Mrs. Mary Flusher attempted to run to the end of the trestle, but was overtaken by the train and hurled down an embankment after her leg had been cut off. She was taken to the Delaware Hospital in a critical condition.

Miss Ryan and Miss Sastburn, together with Mrs. Fisher, were utilizing a short cut homeward. Both girls dropped between the ties and clung with their fingers as the train thundered over them. Members of the train crew dragged them to safety after it was brought to a stop.

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